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THE NEW REPUBLIC

Ideas For The Schools

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Reagan's report card *Margaret Caldwell*

The merit pay snare *Dorothy Wickenden*

Morris High School 1916 *Marie Syrkin*

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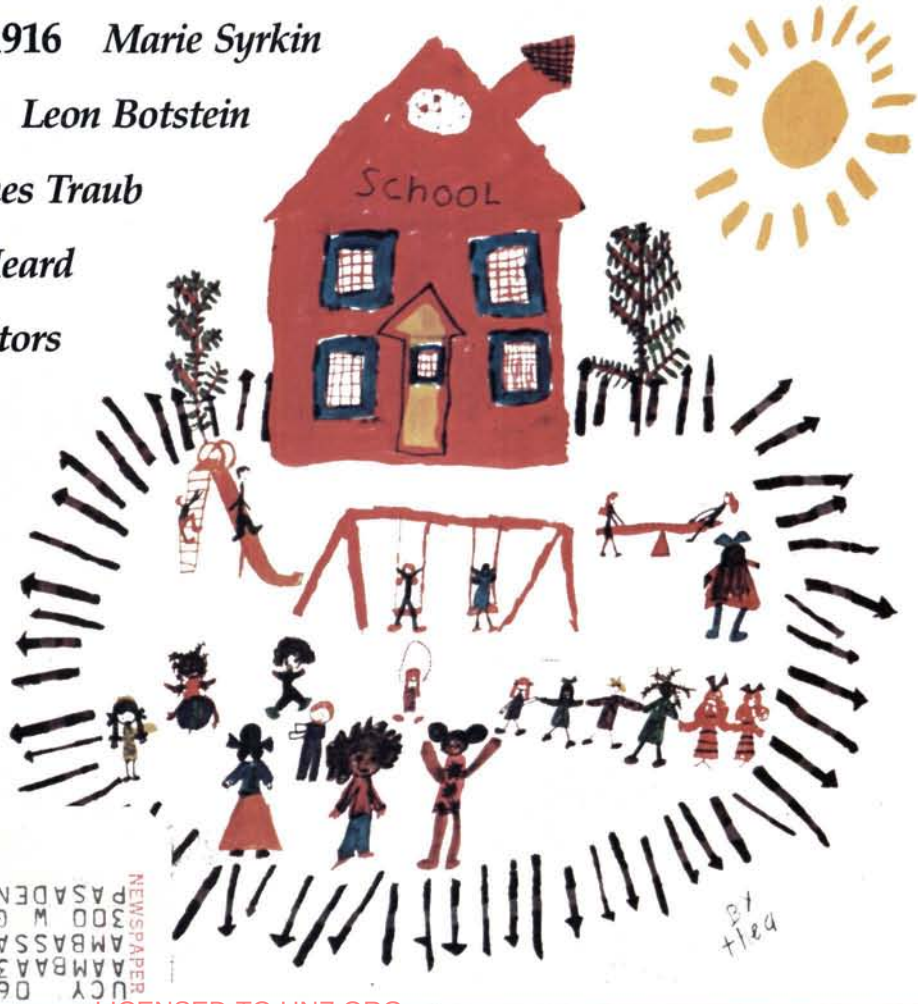

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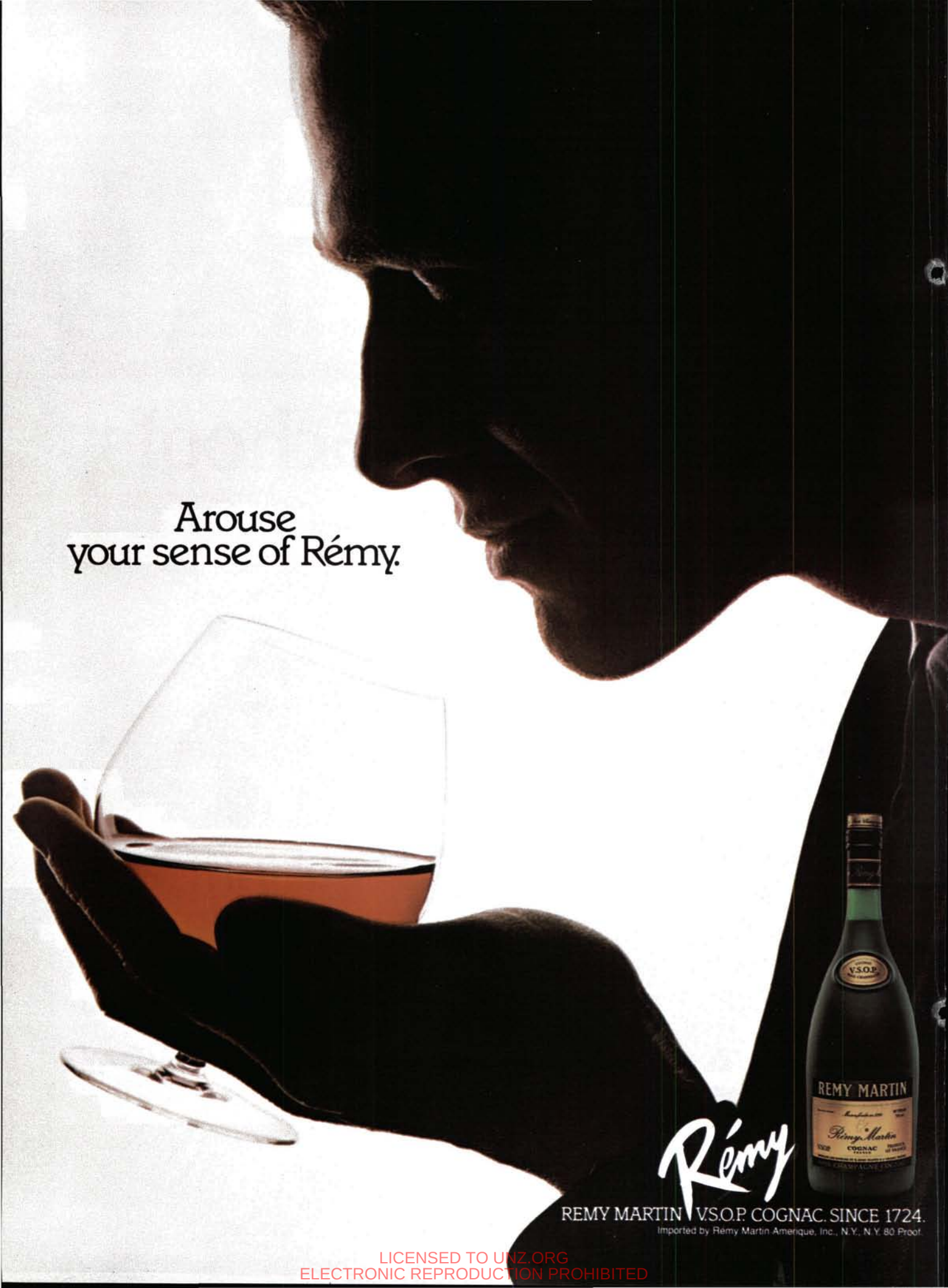

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CORRESPONDENCE

KAL TRAGEDY

To the editors:

"The Wreckage of Flight 007" (TNR, October 3) compels mind and imagination to see that the Soviets are murderous. Yet in that otherwise excellent selection of articles also lies the wreckage of liberalism. Joseph Nocera's article "McDonald's War" is obscene. Nocera's use of private details from Mr. McDonald's life is loathsome. Decency requires silence after the fact that the Honorable Lawrence P. McDonald, a U.S. Representative, was killed, by a Soviet pilot, when on the Republic's business. Why does the resurrection of liberal anti-Soviet analysis require the shroud of anti-anticommunism?

PHILIP N. MARCUS
New York, New York

To the editors:

THE NEW REPUBLIC has used the KAL passenger plane incident to: (1.) endorse Reagan military spending plans; (2.) savagely attack the leading Democratic Presidential contenders; and (3.) indulge itself in a spasm of cold war rhetoric. This is heavy freight to put on a single incident, appalling as it is.

The KAL incident does not alter in any meaningful way the objective assessment of Soviet military strength and capabilities. Military and civilian planners and strategists have long ago cranked into their equations the Soviet Union's capacity for irrational acts, such as the forcing down of a KAL plane five years ago. President Reagan has proposed substantial military spending increases over the Carter budget plans, which had large military spending increases built in. There is nothing "wise" about Reagan using the incident to push military spending plans; his plans only further add to the deficit, and divert human and monetary resources away from dealing with other pressing problems in our society.

THE NEW REPUBLIC's treatment of the leading Democratic candidates—"some of whom should know better"—is inexcusable. It accuses them of naiveté. Are we next going to read that old red-baiting charge: "They will crawl on their knees to Moscow"?

LAURI E. KALLIO
Park Forest South, Illinois

BIG PAC ATTACK

To the editors:

I disagree with Robert J. Samuelson's criticism of Elizabeth Drew's recent book *Politics and Money* ("The Campaign Reform Failure," TNR, September 5). Samuelson argued that Drew greatly exaggerated the role money plays in American politics and that the reforms she and others suggest lead to "dead ends." Drew's book accurately reports the insidious and widespread impact of money on politics at both the executive and legislative levels. Reform of campaign financing is an urgent priority for anyone who wants to reduce the ability of special interests to profit at the expense of the public's general interest.

The fact is that, as Drew reports, many members of Congress spend an inordinate amount of time and energy raising money for their reelection campaigns and developing voting records that will not provoke special interests into making large contributions to opponents. Such a commitment of time and energy to fundraising inevitably detracts from Congress's ability to educate itself about the substance of the issues before it, much less to engage in the long-range planning and analysis that is so sorely lacking in today's government.

As an example of Samuelson's tendency to understate the magnitude of the problem, consider his statement that independent oil producers, long renowned for their deep pockets as campaign contributors, have only marginal impact on policy. To the contrary, pressure from the independent oil producers was a major factor in discouraging the House Ways and Means Committee from writing its own version of the 1982 tax bill. Instead, the Senate version was accepted. The independents had been exempted from any tax increases in the Senate version of the bill, and several members of the Ways and Means Committee, including myself, were urging

continued on page 45

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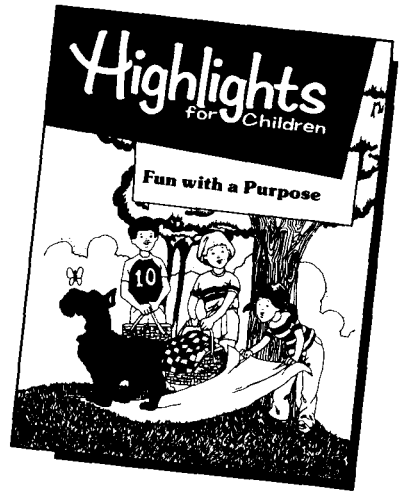

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FROM WASHINGTON

I *Do* Believe In Billions! I Do! I Do!

Five thousand world-class bankers were in Washington recently for the annual do of the International Monetary Fund, fretting, in an atmosphere of sybaritic luxury, about the possible collapse of the Western financial system. You would not guess, from the lavish parties and what *The Washington Post* called "limousine gridlock," that, say, the Brazilian official enjoying the Citibank hospitality suite at the Shoreham Hotel owes Citibank alone $73 million, and is a walking I.O.U. for $55 billion more. Try getting a canapé out of Citibank when your checking account is $10 overdrawn. Try getting anything much to eat in some of these struggling countries after the I.M.F. is through whipping them into shape to pay their debts.

Third-world nations owe first-world bankers more than $600 billion. There is great doubt about whether they can ever repay it and no doubt whatsoever about whether they can repay it on time. They would like to unload some of this burden back onto the banks, through renegotiations, and the banks would like to unload it onto the taxpayers of the Western world, through a sort of blackmail. "I have never worried that the international banking system would collapse as a result of current problems. It's too unacceptable to allow that to happen," the chairman of Chemical Bank ($170 billion at risk) explained jovially to *The New York Times*.

It's worth remembering who started this game of hot potato. Although there are several causes for the current plight of the debtor nations, the biggest one by far is OPEC. The price of oil had already risen by half in the year before the big squeeze began in 1973. William R. Cline of the Institute for International Economics has calculated what the third world's fuel bill would have been if, from 1973 on, oil had merely risen with the U.S. wholesale price index (which itself, of course, partially reflected the OPEC hijack). He concludes that the non-oil debtor nations would have saved $260 billion over the next decade, plus billions more in interest on the money they had to borrow. This is well over half the $482 billion their debt increased during that time, and more than enough to explain their current repayment problems.

Some of the OPEC nations have spent their ill-gotten gains. Some have even gone into debt. But for Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and a few others, the money has poured in faster than their parched societies could absorb it. Kindly Western banks to the rescue again! They invented a swell process known as "recycling," whereby the Saudis give their money to the banks, which give it to the poor countries, which give it back to the Saudis, and so on. The banks get the vigorish, the poor countries get some oil and mounting due bills, and the OPEC nations get . . . what? Well, according to a recent Brookings study, they've got about $380 billion invested in the Western financial system. There is $144 billion in bank deposits, $42 billion in U.S. government bonds and notes, etc.

What does $380 billion look like? Not much. In fact, most of OPEC's alleged "wealth" acquired in the past decade is nothing more than a few scraps of paper and electronic blips. With that much money, it could hardly be otherwise. There is no such thing as $380 billion of gold or camels or wives. The very idea of $380 billion is a product—indeed a monopoly—of the Western financial system.

Who says there's $144 billion of OPEC deposits in Western banks? It has no physical reality. It's a metaphysical concept. Not even that, really—it's just a conceit. We all agree to act as if this money exists, and so, for practical purposes, it exists. It sits there until its "owners" are ready to spend it on real material things. The whole operation is based on what is known in the theater as the "willing suspension of disbelief." If we ever stopped believing in OPEC's $144 billion, even for a moment, it would disappear. Like Tinker Bell.

Should we blink? Undo the OPEC ripoff in a flash? Double-cross the con-

continued on page 46

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
NOVEMBER 7, 1983

MORE THAN MONEY

America only knows something, it seems, when a national commission affirms it. So it is with education. We've all been vaguely aware that American schools were failing to give American children a good education—by comparison to past U.S. standards, to current standards abroad, and especially to the needs of America in the future—but now we know it officially through the work of one panel after another: the President's National Commission on Excellence in Education, the Twentieth Century Fund, the Education Commission of the States' Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The evidence cited by the various panels is by now familiar—a twenty-year decline in College Board scores, international comparisons showing American students consistently performing less well than pupils in other industrialized countries, a U.S. Department of Education study showing a steady decline in enrollment in advanced academic subjects in high schools and a steady increase in enrollment in frill courses such as driver education and home economics.

The expert panels also are fairly clear and consistent on what needs to be done to improve American education: we need higher performance standards for graduation from high school and admission to college, more homework, more emphasis on academic subjects such as English, foreign languages, history, math, and science. We need more order and discipline in the schools. And we need better teachers—teachers who are better educated, better paid, and more highly motivated.

At the state and local level, in fact, improvement is beginning. During the past three years, according to one report, 53 percent of the country's sixteen thousand school districts have increased the number of credits they require for graduation, and another 38 percent will upgrade standards by 1985. Twenty states have passed tougher teacher certification laws. Forty-five states have formed task forces to draw up school reforms. Even during this time of fiscal hardship for the states, a number of them—notably Mississippi, Florida, Tennessee, and California—have undertaken major new initiatives to increase education spending. They are driven by the knowledge that substandard education will damage a locality's ability to attract industry, provide jobs, and keep its young people from moving away.

At the Presidential (and Presidential candidate) level, however, the responses to America's educational challenge have been confined largely to finger-pointing and political self-service. As Margaret Caldwell reports in this special issue on education (see "President Reagan's Report Card," page 8), President Reagan has been talking a lot about education lately, but doing little. He has taken the warnings by the various commissions as opportunities to zero in on a couple of his favorite targets, the federal government and the (pro-Democratic) National Education Association, the nation's largest teachers' union. This year he has stopped trying to cut federal education spending by one-third as he did last year—he failed, thanks to Congress—but he persists in blaming educational decline on federal aid, and claiming that educational excellence can be obtained without additional spending.

To the extent that Mr. Reagan is offering concrete remedies, he seems to be doing so for political—not educational—effect. He is recommending a school-prayer amendment to the Constitution to please evangelical fundamentalists, tuition tax credits to please working-class Catholics, and merit pay for teachers to embarrass the N.E.A. The President's one meritorious initiative is small and belated—the just-announced Partnerships in Education program, which will give a nominal amount of national help to a successful local experiment—the

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"adopt-a-school" idea whereby corporations, labor unions, and other private organizations give money and expertise to improve the schools and provide jobs to pupils. The long-run benefit of such adoptions lies in the attention that the education system once again will get from community leaders.

Corporate charity, however, is no substitute for public policy and public money. Mr. Reagan may choose to ignore the fact, but every one of the recent educational reports calls for more money, and almost all envision increased federal involvement. One obvious major area of cost will be the higher salaries required to attract better candidates to the teaching profession. In 1982, the average teacher salary was $17,300. For plumbers, telephone repairmen, and mail carriers, it was $21,000, and for stock brokers, chemists, and engineers, about $30,000. For nearly two centuries, American education got by cheaply by paying substandard wages to women who were barred from other jobs. Those days are over.

Mr. Reagan's alternative to higher salaries across the board is locally financed "merit pay" for selected teachers, but as Dorothy Wickenden shows (see "Merit Pay Won't Work," page 12), such plans have failed in most school districts. Better alternatives include the Tennessee Master Teacher Program and the North Carolina career teacher plan, in which teachers who receive special training and take on additional responsibilities can rise over the years toward salaries that are competitive with those in other professions. It's important to note that both plans are expensive.

If the Republicans think the United States can have educational excellence on the cheap, the Democrats seem to think we can have it merely by spending more money. A bidding war is underway to see who can come up with the biggest price tag. So far the winners are Walter Mondale, with an $11 billion per year proposal, and Ernest Hollings—who just yesterday favored a total freeze on federal spending—with $14 billion. Mr. Mondale is favored by both of the nation's rival teachers' unions, the N.E.A. and the American Federation of Teachers, which is a tribute to his political agility as well as to his record as an advocate of higher teacher salaries and federal spending.

AMERICAN EDUCATION does need money, but more than that it needs deregulation and rededication. In most states, entry into the teaching profession and subsequent advancement have been rigidly controlled by an education establishment that runs the teachers colleges, sets certification and accreditation requirements, and influences school boards and state legislators. A ventilation of this process is required, so that the brightest young people in America will be attracted to the teaching profession and will be able to advance in it. Teacher certification examinations have been adopted in several states as a screen to keep unqualified teachers out. Why not, for example, do away with the education major at the undergraduate level, as Diane Ravitch proposes (see "Scapegoating the Teachers," page 27), and have would-be teachers major in regular academic subjects? This idea is being advanced by William J. Bennett, chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, who has put forward an experimental, but very sound, proposal to universities to upgrade the academic preparation of would-be teachers.

A rededication to the purposes of education is required of us all. School boards and administrators need to set teachers free to be teachers, not bureaucrats and cops. Teachers need to ask more of their pupils, and their unions need to devote less time and energy to politics and more to the quality of life in the classroom. The universities need to demand more of elementary and secondary schools. Parents need to demand more of the education system, but also more of themselves as supervisors of their children and as taxpayers. Legislators need to vote the revenues to make education better and reform existing education establishments. Corporations, newspapers, and civic leaders have to make educational quality a major focus of their time. Presidents need to give education more than just words, and would-be Presidents more than just promises.

EDUCATION '83

PRESIDENT REAGAN'S REPORT CARD

SINCE JANUARY 1983, when Ronald Reagan began talking more about education than any President in memory, he has continued on his determined course, set in January 1981, of doing less. The President's apologists hasten to assert that the bully pulpit is, by golly, *precisely* the place for a President, education being by Constitution and tradition a state and local matter. But even his admirers are beginning to worry about what might be called cognitive dissonance on Reagan's part. "His Administration, having tried repeatedly to cut federal spending for current education programs, has trouble responding credibly to charges of being 'anti-education,' " Chester Finn recently wrote in *The Wall Street Journal*. "His problem is that, after two years of total silence on the subject, he cannot help but look a bit like an opportunistic reader of opinion polls." That is what his *friends* say. A nonadmirer, prominent in education and civil rights circles, sums up Reagan's position this way: "I have identified a serious problem, and I insist on doing nothing about it."

Although the President's new-found concern for education didn't become feverish until the Democratic Presidential candidates entered the bidding war last spring, it started with his 1983 State of the Union address: "We must join together—parents, teachers, grass-roots groups, organized labor, and the business community—to revitalize American education by setting a standard of excellence."

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To this end, his four major education goals for 1983 were: a "quality education initiative" to encourage improvement of math and science instruction through block grants to the states (a little over $1 per pupil); establishment of tax-sheltered "education savings accounts," similar to Individual Retirement Accounts, for parents faced with college expenses; passage of tuition tax credits; and a constitutional amendment to permit organized prayer in public schools.

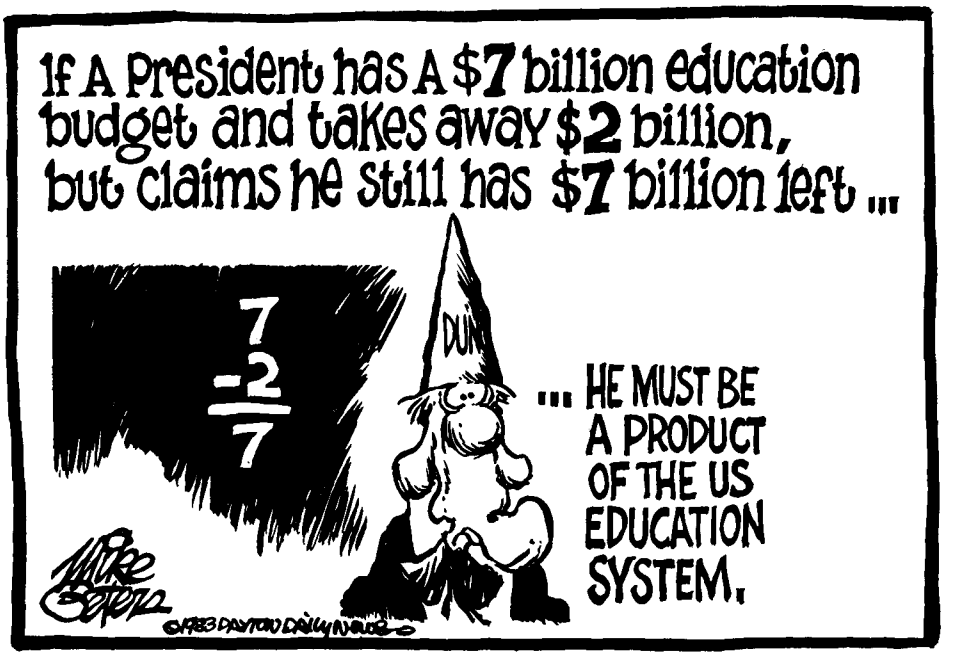
The President's adversaries, who would like to raise doubts about his sincerity as a friend of education, could hardly ask for an easier mark. He has tried to cut federal aid to education by one-third, with even larger cuts in programs like Title I, which provides compensatory education in the basic skills to disadvantaged children. The President espouses voluntary integration but has dismantled the Emergency School Assistance Act, the one modest federal program to promote it; his Justice Department seeks the reversal of existing busing plans and, as Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights William Bradford Reynolds says, it "will not compel anyone to have an integrated education who doesn't want one." Reagan greeted the report of his own Commission on Excellence in Education—which called for substantial and costly improvements and a continued federal role—with a rededication to tuition tax credits and prayer in public schools and ringing endorsement of merit pay. Although his Secretary of Education extols federally supported educational research, he managed just this month to force a 13 percent cut in the outlay for such efforts. And then he told a group of high school students, "There haven't been cutbacks in funding for public education."

If you stretch the definition of "cutback," he's right. Thanks to some determined members of Congress, the federal education budget for the fiscal year just ended was, in fact, about the same size (not adjusting for inflation) as Jimmy Carter's last one. But within that budget of about $15 billion, there has been so much internal juggling of priorities that some programs of vital importance to school districts—and particularly urban districts—have been cut severely and others have been eliminated altogether.

Of the many measures on the President's agenda, only one—the consolidation of several small programs into a block grant to the states, with a 25 percent cut in the overall appropriation—has gone through Congress according to his plan. When the block grant went into effect, money was no longer alloted for such specific purposes as instructional equipment and materials, or aid to schools undergoing desegregation; states and school districts gained considerable discretion over spending of funds. The old desegregation-aid program didn't provide a lot of money—$149 million in its last year—but it permitted districts to institute programs such as urban magnet schools in the sciences or the performing arts that wouldn't have been possible otherwise. In many instances such programs, which give students a choice about which schools to attend, defused hostility over busing—and helped keep middle-class families in public schools. When state education agencies were presented with the federal block grant and a virtual carte blanche in spending it, most chose to spread the money a mile wide and an inch deep. Predictably, there was little political support for desegregation programs at the state level—and, predictably, no state replaced the desegregation aid lost by its cities.

To be sure, some districts that thrived under the old system of categorical programs did so because they employed clever grantsmen. But one analyst, after examining the flow of funds before and after the switch to the block grant, concluded that the law led to a "massive redistribution" of money from the shrinking school systems of the East and Midwest to the rapidly growing West, from hard-pressed urban and rural school districts to the suburbs.

"Without a doubt, Reagan's policies have been disastrous for most of public education and certainly for districts such as ours," laments Rondle Edwards, superintendent of schools in East Cleveland, Ohio, a virtually all black urban system of eighty-five hundred students. "We have recovered in Title I funds, because our incidence of poverty has increased, but we're $1.5 million short in other federal funds we've depended on for the past ten years. . . . Much of what we have accomplished could be turned back because of our inability to raise funds for


If A President has A $7 billion education budget and takes away $2 billion, but claims he still has $7 billion left ...
7
-2
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DUH
... HE MUST BE A PRODUCT OF THE US EDUCATION SYSTEM.
Mike Peters
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special programs dealing with remediation, student motivation, parent education, teacher in-service training. Those funds have all dried up under Mr. Reagan." All of this came, of course, at precisely the time when states and localities, buffeted by recession and property-tax limitations, could least afford it. By the mid-1970s, it was not unusual for the neediest urban and rural school districts to derive 25 percent of their revenues from federal sources. Now, the combination of cuts and redistribution has made a 15 percent federal share an anomaly.

And if Reagan had had his way, far more damage would have been done. The President's original plan called for incorporating Title I into a block grant to the states, reducing the appropriation by 38 percent, and repealing regulations that were adopted to stop school systems from using the money to build gymnasiums and buy cars. The program, now known as Chapter 1, has been retained with only minor deregulation and its funding has stayed steady. Likewise, the President wanted to consolidate a dozen categorical special education programs for the handicapped into a single block grant, deregulate them, and cut funding by 17 percent. Again, he failed; funding remains at slightly over $1 billion, which covers only a fraction of the cost of the federally mandated programs. And two years in a row, Congress rebuffed the President's attempt to cut college-student aid, including a 40 percent reduction in the Pell Grants program. This year, he has proposed more generous grants and loans in the major programs, with tighter eligibility requirements.

Having learned that he isn't going to get his way in Congress—and perhaps that the electorate cares deeply about education—Mr. Reagan has begun to moderate in some respects. His plan to abolish the Department of Education has been all but abandoned, and the 1984 budget is his first to propose no cuts in funds for the education of disadvantaged and handicapped students. Compared with last year's attempt to cut federal education spending by one-third, his fiscal 1984 budget proposal of $13 billion—described by Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell as an attempt to ease the "pressures on state and local budgets"—looked positively generous. He continues, however, to press for cuts in vocational and adult education. And, as if to verify that it's still a Reagan budget, the proposal calls for $245 in tuition tax credits for families with children in nonpublic schools.

FOR THE PAST quarter-century, the government has acted primarily as a guardian of civil rights, seeking through statute and regulation, enforcement and cajolery, to include those previously excluded and to raise the achievement level of the lowest achievers. These policies, for all the administrative and political difficulties they have posed, have been at least modestly successful in their overall goals. The gap in reading skill between young black pupils and their white classmates is narrowing, and researchers have given much of the credit to federally supported programs such as Head Start, Title I, and desegregation. Hundreds of thousands of handicapped children who once were isolated in institutions or excluded from school altogether are now in public schools. Today nearly half of all black students in the South attend fully integrated schools; in 1963, 99 percent attended all black schools, and no white students attended majority black schools. Women now make up nearly 52 percent of all college students, up from 40 percent fifteen years ago.

YET REAGAN believes that federal initiatives were major contributors to the decline of public education. "We created the greatest public school system the world has ever seen, and then have let it deteriorate," he said last spring. "I think you can make a case that it began to deteriorate when the federal government started interfering in education." The decline in SAT scores and other statistical indicators of achievement did coincide with the greatest growth in federal aid to education, but if in fact standards fell during that period, most of the blame lies with the state and local policymakers whose authority is so sacrosanct to the Administration; they were the ones, after all, who were in charge of formulating curricula, graduation standards, teacher-certification requirements, and tenure laws.

And in Reagan's view, more state and local money isn't necessarily the answer either. Upon receiving an honorary degree from the University of South Carolina last month, he said: "We don't need money as much as we need leadership from principals and superintendents, dedication from well-trained teachers, homework, testing, efficient use of time, and good old-fashioned discipline. . . . If money was the answer, the problem over the last ten years would have been shrinking, not growing."

There he goes again! Unquestionably, some improvements are possible without more money. Teachers and administrators are the first to admit it. Many schools have been remarkably resourceful in using limited money and time effectively. But it is equally clear that an out-of-the-way school district that can pay a beginning teacher only $9,360 cannot be very choosy about the qualifications of its personnel, and that a district whose buildings are falling apart cannot invest in computers or state-of-the-art science labs. Reagan himself inadvertently pointed this out last spring, when he applauded three principals for turning their schools around simply by bootstrapping it. As it turned out, one of the schools had sixteen federally supported remedial teachers on its staff; the principal of another attributed his inner-city school's success largely to desegregation and the federal funds that accompanied it.

"One enemy of excellence is cheapness," A. Graham Down, executive director of the fiercely independent Council for Basic Education, which was founded in the 1950s to promote liberal education, told a recent gathering at the National Press Club. "At present, the Reagan Administration allies itself with the popular cause of school improvement but is unwilling to assume responsibilities that the federal government alone can shoulder. As a consequence, federal officials sometimes put themselves in grotesque contortions. We are told that education is a

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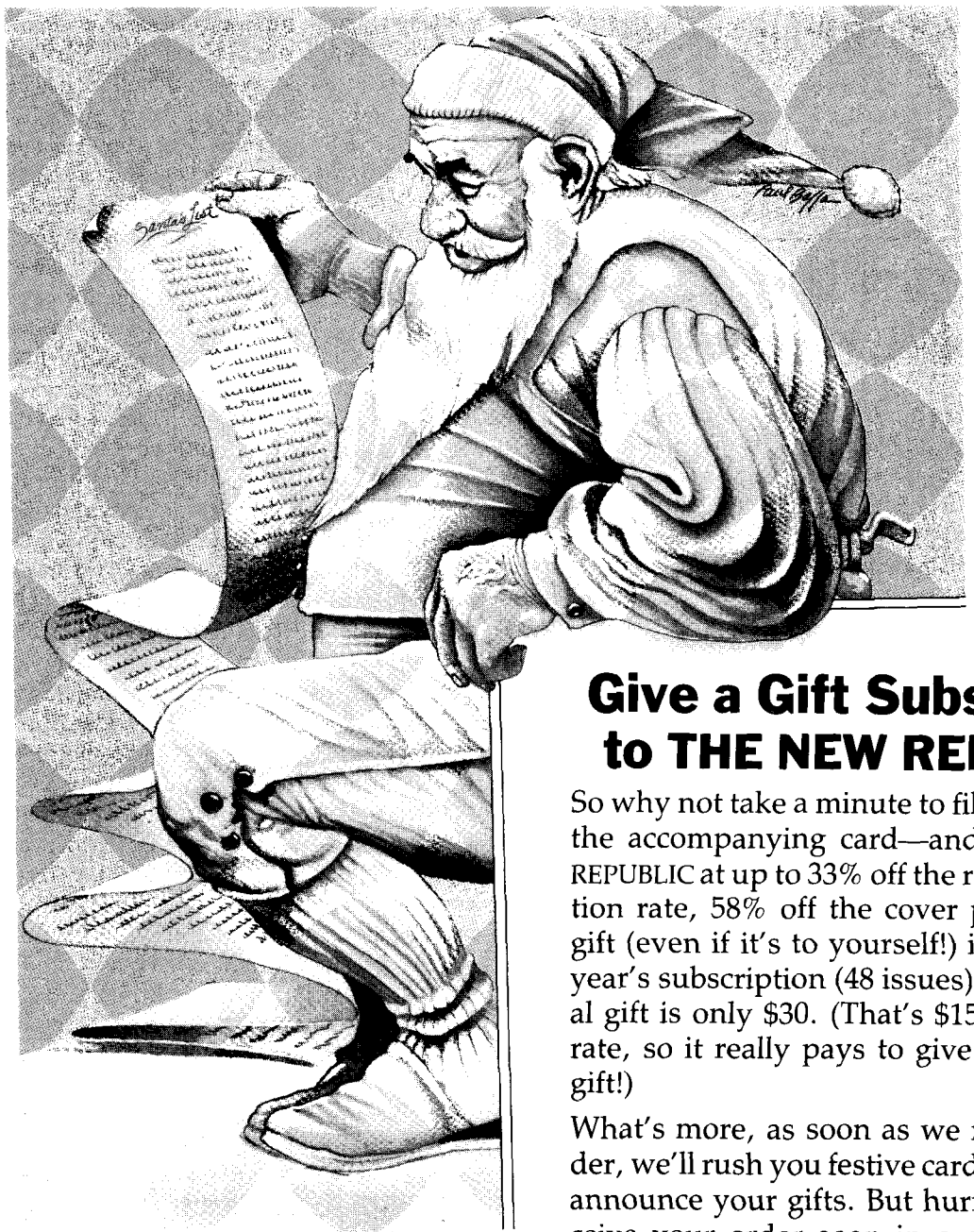

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national emergency, but that the national government should merely cheerlead for the rescue operation. We are told that excellence doesn't cost money, but that states should pay for it. What can one say about a President who proposes to stem the tide of mediocrity by enacting a school-prayer amendment?" The answer is plenty, as the Democratic candidates are discovering.

MARGARET CALDWELL

Margaret Caldwell is a reporter and editor for *Education Week*.

EDUCATION '83

MERIT PAY WON'T WORK

"I SAW something interesting in *The Washington Post* several weeks ago," President Reagan told a group of elementary and secondary school principals when he welcomed them to the White House last July. "It was a story on how the Soviet leadership is considering ways to get the Soviet economy moving again. Well, one proposal is to depart from the practice of paying Soviet citizens relatively equal wages irrespective of job performance. Now if even Yuri Andropov and the Soviet bureaucracy are beginning to realize the need for merit pay, why can't certain segments of our own educational establishment?" It was a rare moment: Ronald Reagan citing Yuri Andropov as an authority on the capitalist work ethic. It was also a characteristic one: the beguiling anecdote that is as misleading as it is instinctively appealing. Of course good teachers should be paid more than bad ones. Even the National Education Association—at which the President's barb was clearly directed—now concedes as much. But merit pay will not get the system moving again. (Mr. Andropov, take note.) It will not improve the morale of teachers. It will not entice talented new teachers into the schools or prevent talented veterans from leaving. It will not help weed out the tenured incompetents. The clamorous public response to Reagan's call to punish the shirkers and reward the toilers shows that merit pay is a terrific political slogan. But experience has shown that in the schools it is a blunt instrument at best.

Like so many education reforms, merit pay means something altogether different to people who know about it in practice, on the one hand, and reflexive critics of "the education establishment," on the other. In essence, merit pay is nothing more than a money reward for exceptional teaching, usually made on the basis of a written evaluation by a principal. It has been widely touted as a daring departure from the standard single salary schedule, which determines teacher salaries strictly according to seniority and academic credentials. But in fact merit pay schemes of various kinds have been tried in hundreds of school districts around the country since the beginning of the century, and they have been abandoned again and again for just the reasons cited by the N.E.A., the American Federation of Teachers, and countless school administrators. Teacher performance, unlike the work of, say, an insurance salesman, is not easily gauged by objective standards of productivity. More often than providing an incentive for teachers to excel, merit pay has played a subtly invidious role in breaking down already tenuous relations between school administrators and staff. It has been an excuse for school boards to perpetuate low salaries; for principals to play favorites and discriminate against women, minorities, and union activists; and for teachers to suspect their colleagues and superiors of nefarious doings.

Around the same time Reagan was urging principals around the country to adopt merit pay in their schools, the San Marino, California, school district dropped its plan, which had been in effect for twenty-five years—far longer than the average lifespan. The problems San Marino eventually encountered were typical. The plan worked like this: the school board determined the amount of money to be allocated every year for merit pay (although, since no extra funds were provided, it meant more for the favored few and less for the overworked, underpaid majority). Each year up to 30 percent of the teachers would receive a bonus of between $200 (for a tenured teacher with three years' experience) and $2,000 (for one with twenty years' experience). It was left to the school principals to parcel out the bonuses, purportedly after reviewing a teacher at work a minimum of three times and filling out an exhaustive evaluation form regarding his or her "instructional skills, pupil relationships, parent and community relationships, professional relationships, classroom (or assignment) responsibilities, professional growth, and personal factors." The plan's strength lay in the strict confidentiality of the evaluations. But in 1979, a history teacher filed a grievance stating that he had not been evaluated at all one year, and was turned down for a merit bonus the next because, he was told, he had failed one of the 101 criteria. A three-year investigation was launched, and it developed that teachers throughout the district had similar complaints. There was no appeal for teachers who felt they had been unfairly evaluated, and no reliable standard from which they could judge their weaknesses and strengths.

President Reagan's infatuation with the idea of merit pay derives in large part from the dubious assumption that it will help improve the quality of teaching. His rationale: reward the best teachers and they will be given an incentive to stay on in the field, and perhaps the drones will work a little harder if they know that bonuses are contingent upon their strengths in the classroom. But teachers don't choose to be ineffective out of spite or laziness; for the most part they are doing the best job they know how to do. Furthermore, merit pay does nothing to solve the

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problem of truly incompetent teachers, who are there because of slack certification standards and rigid tenure laws. Finally, in the real world of classrooms as opposed to the never-never land of Op-Ed pages, teacher "performance" is judged as often on the neatness and thoroughness of one's lesson plans and on one's success in currying favor with the principal as on one's skills in imparting knowledge. One seasoned teacher who has worked in two New York state school systems with merit pay plans says: "I'm pretty sure that I could go into any school and tell impressionistically who the good teachers are. But I'd have less faith in the instincts of a lot of the school administrators I've known, and I don't know of any objective way of making these judgments. Too many things are out of the teacher's control. If I get a class of bright, enthusiastic kids who earn national merit scholarships, I'm going to look great—but what if I'm teaching slow kids?"

SOME MERIT pay plans attempt to get around the troublesome issue of subjective evaluations by devising standards which measure teachers' results, not their methods. They presume that the quality of teachers' work in the classroom is quantifiable in "objective" end-of-the-year measures such as test scores. Take the Dallas public schools, where the superintendent, Linus Wright, has been talking with great enthusiasm about the merit pay plan that just squeaked through the board of education, over the strong objections of the teachers. It's a fancy computer-based program (the first of its kind) that will award merit pay to all teachers in the top 25 percent of those schools where student test scores exceed the computer's projections. Robby Collins, director of employee relations, told Paul Taylor of *The Washington Post* that the plan was designed to eliminate the fractiousness that has so often led to the downfall of merit pay: "Once you have human beings evaluating other human beings, the systems produce jealousies, morale problems. The beauty of our system is that it's done totally by computer." But even high-tech merit pay can't transform lousy teachers into good ones, and this plan may actually perpetuate incompetence. How will Dallas's teachers respond to the new incentive to improve their kids' test scores? Maureen Peters, the president of the Dallas Federation of Teachers, predicts that teacher-assisted cheating, already a widespread problem, will rise. "Everyone in every school knows someone who's cheating—usually inadvertently," she told me. "Teachers get pressure from the principal. They perceive test scores to be the goal of education and a way to maintain their jobs, let alone to get a pay increase. Elementary school teachers leave the multiplication charts on the walls. High school teachers walk around the classroom during tests and nod or shake their heads."

High test scores, although they may please parents and principals, are not the goal of education—or even necessarily the mark of a good teacher, as Maureen Peters points out. All this is not to say, as the N.E.A. has over the years, that it is impossible to judge a teacher's effectiveness fairly. (Only in the past few months has the N.E.A. modified its rigid opposition to any reform of teacher compensation.) But if schools expect high standards from their staff, they must also expect to pay for them—in significantly higher salaries, in the time and planning it takes to hammer out a thorough evaluation system, and in finding ways of encouraging strong teaching techniques. The single salary schedule, which rewards ambitious teachers by relieving them of their teaching duties and "promoting" them into administrative jobs, has clearly failed to do this.

Straightforward merit pay schemes for the most part have fared no better. Those that have succeeded have been in congenial school districts characterized by what Education Research Service describes as "strong, dynamic leadership," where teachers and administrators cooperate on working out the plan, where all salaries are moderately respectable, and where the bonuses are significant. One need hardly point out how few schools have this felicitous mixture. And as the San Diego City school district bluntly put it way back in 1953, "Merit programs too frequently presuppose that all improvement comes through changing the teachers."

THE MOST promising alternatives to merit pay now under consideration in a number of school districts and state legislatures recognize that the only way to get better teachers is to improve the conditions under which they teach, and to upgrade the status of the profession itself. This was one of the rudimentary truths discovered by all of the recently released education reports. One teacher interviewed by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching said, "I work as a meat cutter in the summer at one of the nearby butcher shops, and I don't usually tell them I'm a teacher. One butcher finally found out that I was a full-time teacher and his comment to me was, 'Man, that's a dead-end job. You must be a real dummy.' " The negligible salary increases over the years, combined with the lack of opportunity for promotion and professional training and the low public repute of teaching, make one wonder that there are any dedicated, competent teachers left in the schools. According to *Action for Excellence*, published by North Carolina Governor James Hunt's task force, a teacher in Montgomery County, Maryland (a wealthy suburb of Washington with excellent schools), who has a college degree, special training, and two years of experience, earns $12,323—less than a liquor store clerk with a high school diploma and comparable time on the job.

The secret of the best new systems—most notably Tennessee's Master Teacher Program and the career teacher plan being devised for Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina—is their radical transformation of the teacher's role. John Goodlad's book, *A Place Called School*, and the Carnegie Commission's *High School* found that teachers currently spend as much time being wardens—taking attendance, keeping an orderly classroom, fulfilling lunchroom duty—as they do being instructors. Teacher authority is subverted as a matter of course. In the old days principals made announcements in a civil manner, during

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How To Write An Education Report

You say you're one of the host of educational policymakers (a group including state education commissioners, school administrators, teachers, parents, interested lay persons, ed school deans, and advocates of higher-order thinking skills) who have been "charged" to write a "major report" on the sharp decline in educational quality that will generate plenty of concerned editorials, and you don't know where to start?

Don't panic.

The authors of *A Nation at Risk*, *Things Here Educationally Are Real Bad*, *Our Schools Have Had It*, and the sixty-seven other major condemnatory education reports that have come out this year didn't know where to start either. (Neither did the other eighty-three groups scheduled to report before Arbor Day.) These groups found that education-report writing is easy, fun, and may lead to big $$$ in the form of federal and state appropriations and local property-tax hikes—and so can you.

I hear you asking, "But won't I need lengthy, detailed policy recommendations?" Sure, but you'll have no trouble selecting usable, thoughtful policy recs from the hundreds already in circulation. If your group is intent on "original" proposals, just remember the key word *more*: more math, more science, more reading, more homework, more discipline, more principals who are more strong, more school hours, more "computer literacy" (and more money for the "new information technologies"), more "quality instructional time," more "time-on-task," more "in-service training," more teachers, more qualified teachers with more training who won't need additional training "on-site," and (you can't use this one too often) more "excellence." Whatever proposals you select, though, *count* them and label that section "An XX-Point Plan of Implementation," with little typographic bullets in front of each item.

But that's content, which is easy. What you have to worry about is *style*, that crucial intangible that will help your education report get noticed in a world already choked with education reports. Here are some important style points to think about:

• *The Grabber:* This education-report buff will never forget the chill that ran through the right side of his brain the day he read the first line of *A Nation at Risk*: "Our nation is at risk." That sentence hit me with the force of a K-12 seminar on metacognitive learning; I *had* to keep reading.

Your report better have a strong, punchy opening line, too. Here are examples of snazzy lead sentences that have worked for others:

> Jesus Christ! We need help!

> Look into my face. My name is Might-Have-Been. I am also known as No More, Too Late, Farewell, and the Dream of American Educational Excellence.

> Education, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. Ed-u-ca-tion: the tip of the tongue taking a trip of four steps down the palate to tap, at four, on the teeth. Ed. U. Ca. Tion.

Also, don't forget to mention Sputnik (or "post-Sputnik") somewhere in the first or second graf.

• *Memorable Images and Quotable Quotes:* You'll need strong metaphors containing easily quotable phrases. Again, you can't go wrong studying *A Nation at Risk*, which gave us both "unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament" and the solid-gold "rising tide of mediocrity." Unfortunately, these phrases have upped the ante of education-report prose. Now, phrases that might have shocked in a more innocent age ("threatened disaster," "Our children could be stragglers in a world of technology") seem dandified . . . unmemorable . . . *not quotable*.

Try something along these lines:

> Our education system, once a proud and soaring bird, may soon be swallowed whole in the muck of not-that-good education.

> Our educational ship may soon founder on a rising sandbar of less than excellence.

> Were our education system sent home with the report card it deserves, it might well be spanked by angry parents.

> Our education system is like a high school football team down 6 to 0 deep in its own territory with no time-outs and an injured 1st-string QB. If an unfriendly rival tried to impose our education system on us, we would be tempted to steal that team's mascot.

• *Money:* Nobody will take you seriously unless you ask for increased "funding" for education. How much you ask for depends on your locale and the scope of your report. Try these figures: $6.7 billion, $3.3 billion, $73.1 million, $14.5 million, $174,000, $35,313, $1,300, and "at least enough to pay for heat and decent textbooks."

• *Computer Gap:* Put in something about the one that exists between rich and poor kids (use the phrase "hands-on experience" somewhere), and how it can't be closed without funding. If you've overused "funding" by this point, use "seed money."

• *Wrapping Up:* This part is complicated. It's important to make your report gloomy so people will take it seriously, but it's just as important to close with a boffo, "upbeat" tone, otherwise it will be dismissed as "not thoughtful" and "overly pessimistic." I recommend wrapping up with a reprise of your education metaphor; this gives your report a nice frame. For example: "Yet, if we act together, our educational bird can, like the phoenix of ancient lore, rise once again into the blue skies of educational excellence and . . . ," etc.

Last thing (important!): Recommend that, as a first step in "implementing" your proposals, the members of your study group must break up into smaller groups, each assigned to conduct a longitudinal (that is, permanent) assessment of the problem. Needless to say, each group will need seed money, and after that, funding.

Alex Heard

Alex Heard has read all, yes all, the education reports released this year.

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school assembly or by having a note quietly delivered to the teacher. Now they bark orders and news about school sporting events over the public address system, often in the middle of class. There is little or no time during the day for collegial discussions about ideas and teaching methods. "Frankly, the question of merit as such is a trivial issue," Goodlad told me. "You can raise salaries $5,000 a year, and still have the same old problems on Monday morning. It's a matter of more training and responsibility. The real key is to make teachers feel they have a stake in what they're doing."

TENNESSEE AND Charlotte-Mecklenburg have studied at length—and emphatically discarded—the fundamental premises of merit pay. They take it for granted that teachers teach out of a commitment to the profession, and not out of an expectation of financial rewards; that they burn out and leave not only because of inadequate pay, but because of unrealistic and demeaning demands on their time, a feeling of isolation in the classroom, and a sense of professional frustration.

Under these proposed plans, substantial rewards—in the form of training, regular promotions, and higher salaries for all teachers—are built into the pay scale, not thrown in at the whim of a school board. Evaluations are designed to be both more rigorous and more constructive. For a start, Governor Lamar Alexander has recommended that within the next three-and-a-half years every tenured teacher in Tennessee receive a 20 percent across-the-board raise. And, as in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, teachers will climb "career ladders" over the years as they receive ongoing professional training and take on work during the summer months—in curriculum development, for instance, or in teaching the slow and the gifted. Both programs have requested teachers to help develop and approve the criteria required for advancement, and to be part of the evaluating teams that will periodically review each teacher's progress. Thus they provide a real incentive for all teachers not only to improve their own (and others') teaching methods, but to work with, rather than against, the school administration. A typical teacher today in Tennessee with a master's degree and fifteen years of experience works ten months and moonlights during the summer. Her salary is $18,000. As a "master teacher" (the top rung of Tennessee's career ladder), she would have the option of working ten, eleven, or twelve months, and the opportunity of increasing her earnings by as much as $7,000.

No one who has worked through the laborious process of drawing up these plans underestimates the procedural difficulties in putting them into effect, or overestimates how much they can accomplish. The Tennessee Master Teacher Program was blocked in the Education Committee of the state senate last January because of strenuous objections voiced by the Tennessee Teachers Association. It will have taken a year to work out a compromise acceptable to all, and if the plan passes this time around, it will be an estimated five years before the program is fully underway. The cost will be about $3 million in new state taxes each year—and it is only one part of Governor Alexander's $210 million Better Schools Program, which covers everything from basic skills to university centers of excellence. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg career teacher plan won't be complete for ten years, and will add 10 percent to the district's annual budget. Both plans have the active support of universities (Vanderbilt and the University of Tennessee, and the University of North Carolina), and Tennessee's has gotten as far as it has because of the Governor's role in originating and tirelessly pursuing the idea. Steve Cobb, a Democratic representative who serves on the Education Committee in the Tennessee legislature, and who has helped revise the Master Teacher Program, says: "It will not improve the teaching of the best teachers, but it will reward them more fairly. After a few years it will give teachers an incentive to do better. It will encourage teachers doing well to stay in the profession. It will match the career patterns of other professions. It is not the cure-all, and we don't advertise it as such—don't expect it to repair highways. But it is an important part of a comprehensive education program. It will restore public confidence that we're attempting to motivate teachers and promote change."

In the end, schools will certainly need more than merit pay, and probably more than "career ladders," if they mean to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession and raise the caliber of its members. Ernest Boyer of the Carnegie Commission has proposed a National Teacher Service which "would enable young people to enlist in the cause of education as they might enlist in the military or join the Peace Corps." Congress's National Task Force on Merit Pay recently suggested that the federal government offer ten thousand scholarships (twenty-three in each congressional district) of $5,000 per year to top-ranking students who pledge to teach for two years for each year of scholarship help, or to repay the scholarships, with interest, if another field is chosen. Last summer the National Endowment for the Humanities sponsored fifteen highly successful seminars in which high school teachers studied lyric poetry, American history, religion, and other subjects with professors at universities around the country; next summer the program will expand to include fifty seminars, involving fifty universities.

But if nothing else, the Tennessee and Charlotte-Mecklenburg plans, with all their inherent limitations, should serve as a model and a challenge: to the school boards and principals who feel that only a dozen or two of their teachers are worthy of recognition; to the legislatures that profess their commitment to excellent schools, but refuse to raise taxes enough to fund them; to the unions that say they seek higher standards, but resist stiffer certification standards and tenure laws; to the President, who simultaneously rails about lousy teachers and cuts aid for the public schools; and finally, to the talented teachers who are leaving the profession in disgust.

DOROTHY WICKENDEN

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The Illuminated Vortex

Understanding how the in-cylinder flow of the fuel-air mixture is influenced by chamber geometry provides a key to improving engine performance. By applying a laser measurement technique, a researcher at the General Motors Research Laboratories has gained new insight into the behavior of the flow.

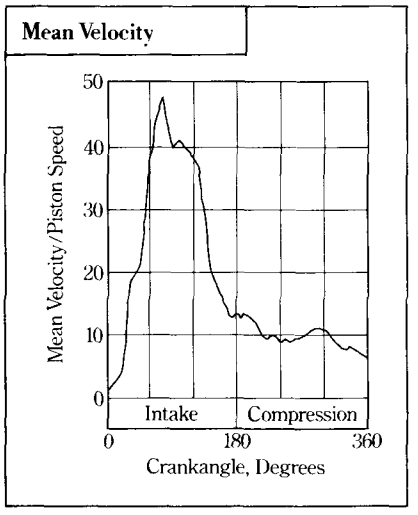


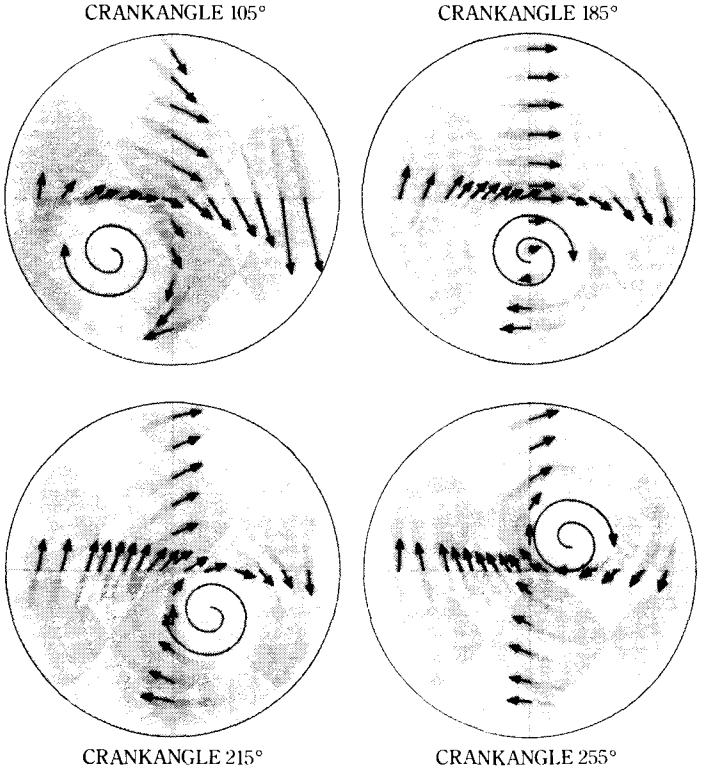
Figure 1: History of mean velocity at a single engine location.

Figure 2: Panoramic view of engine flow patterns. With changing crankangle, the center of rotation precesses from the cylinder's lower left quadrant to its upper right quadrant.

THE FLUID motions inside engine cylinders have considerable influence over the progress of combustion. Mixing of air and fuel, combustion rate, and heat losses from the cylinder are all important transport processes strongly dependent on fluid motions. The motion inside the cylinder has two components. Mean velocity influences the transport of momentum, energy, and species on a cylinder-wide scale, while the turbulence component influences the same phenomena on a local basis. The in-cylinder flow field depends primarily on the geometry of the cylinder and inlet port. Hence, decisions made in the engine design stage exert a controlling influence over the flow. But before questions about how different geometrical features affect the flow field can be answered, the problem of how to measure the flow must be solved. By applying Laser Doppler Anemometry (LDA), Dr. Rodney Rask, a researcher at the General Motors Research Laboratories, has obtained detailed measurements of the flow field.

LDA is a technique in which two focused laser beams pass into the cylinder through a quartz window. In the minute measuring region where the laser beams cross, a regular pattern of interference fringes is created. As the 1-micron particles, which have been added to the engine inlet flow, cross the measurement region, they scatter light in the bright fringes. In Dr. Rask's LDA system, the scattered light is collected by the same lenses used to focus the laser beam, and measured by a photomultiplier tube. The resulting signal is processed electronically to determine the time it takes a particle to traverse a fixed number of fringes. Since the fringe spacing is a known function of the laser beam crossing angle, this transit time provides a direct measure of velocity.

During operation of the LDA, measurements of velocity as a function of engine rotation (crankangle) are made at a number of locations within the cylinder. The instantaneous velocity at each point must then be separated into mean and turbulence components. The simplest technique is to declare that the mean velocities for all cycles are identical and ensemble average the data. However, this approach ignores the cyclic variation in the mean velocity. Another technique looks at individual cycles and uses a variety of methods, including sophisticated filtering, to split the instantaneous velocity into its components. This



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approach is consistent with the LDA measurements, which clearly show that the mean velocity does not repeat exactly from one engine cycle to the next.

Differences in the flow field from one cycle to the next can seriously compromise engine efficiency. Near the end of the compression stroke, it is important to maintain a consistent velocity at key cylinder locations (e.g., at a spark plug). Dr. Rask's LDA measurements have identified design features that control cyclic variability.

FIGURE 1 shows mean velocity measured at a single location during an engine cycle. High velocity exists during the intake stroke when the inlet flow is rushing through the narrow valve opening. This jet-like flow into the cylinder causes large velocity differences between adjacent cylinder locations and produces strong turbulence. As the end of the intake stroke is approached (180 degrees in Figure 1), the levels of both mean velocity and turbulence drop rapidly. This decrease is a result of the changing boundary conditions for the cylinder—from strong inflow to no inflow. During the compression stroke the flow field evolves, but it undergoes no drastic changes. However, in a high-squish chamber, where the flow is forced into a small bowl in the piston or cylinder head, considerable turbulence is generated near the end of the compression stroke.

Measurements from many cylinder locations are necessary to make the flow field understandable. Figure 2 shows four flow patterns covering a period from near the end of intake into the compression stroke. Note the strong vortical flow, with the center of the vortex away from the cylinder center and precessing with changing crankangle.

By experimenting with geometrical variables, Dr. Rask has gained new understanding of phenomena observed in operating engines. The resulting knowledge has guided the design and development of new engines with a minimum of trial-and-error testing. The LDA findings are also being used to validate and calibrate engine flow computer models under development.

"From our measurements," Dr. Rask states, "we have been able to deduce how changes in the geometry of the port and combustion chamber modify the velocity field. These flow field effects are now being used to help designers tailor engine combustion for optimum performance."

General Motors

GM

MARK OF EXCELLENCE

THE MAN BEHIND THE WORK

Dr. Rodney Rask is a Senior Staff Research Engineer in the Fluid Mechanics Department at the General Motors Research Laboratories.

Dr. Rask received his undergraduate and graduate degrees in mechanical engineering from the University of Minnesota. His Ph.D. thesis concerned the Coanda effect.

Prior to joining General Motors in 1973, Dr. Rask worked on the design of nuclear reactors at the Knoll's Atomic Power Laboratories. In addition to further refinements in LDA measurement techniques, his current research interests include computer simulation of engine systems, with special emphasis on the intake manifold.

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EDUCATION '83

MAGNET SCHOOLS: BUSING WITHOUT TEARS?

A DOZEN first graders are seated around a set of xylophones, triangles, and drums at the Waterfront School in Buffalo, New York. Half the children are white, half are black. The teacher instructs them to begin tapping out a rhythm one by one. At first they produce only a weird dissonant clacking, the tuneless tune of Tibetan monks. But as more children chime in the harmony begins to take shape, all the more lovely for being unexpected. It hangs in the air for a moment, quite whole, until, one by one, the children stop playing. As I walk through this cheerful and humane corner of one of Buffalo's "magnet" schools, the harmony remains as an echo, the whisper of a momentous hope that black and white children might learn together in an educationally inspiring setting.

During these panic-stricken times in urban public school systems, integration seems to be a will-o'-the-wisp. In many inner cities so few school-age white children remain that even court-ordered desegregation plans seem to offer too little too late. A number of serious scholars—including black authorities like Derek Bell, the dean of the University of Oregon Law School—have even suggested that the drive for integration be abandoned in order to focus exclusively on improving the quality of the schools. It is only against this background of confusion and despair that one can understand the allure of magnet programs, which claim to integrate schools by improving them, and to substitute free choice for compulsion.

Before they were seized upon as a desegregation tool, magnets were called "specialty schools," or, in 1960s lingo, "alternative schools." The idea was to attract students who might have defected to private schools, or had simply fallen by the wayside, by shaping a school to their needs—thus the honors, vocational, or "open" school. They traditionally drew students from around the district, rather than the neighborhood. Desegregation plans, of course, rely on precisely this scrambling of neighborhood boundaries, except that they do so through mandatory reassignment, or, to use the dreaded term, busing. So when court-ordered desegregation moved northward and westward in the early 1970s, a number of cities, including Philadelphia, Houston, Dallas, St. Louis, and Milwaukee, devised "school enrichment" programs focusing on magnet schools, in order to bring about desegregation through the parents' and children's choice, or simply to avoid swallowing the bitter pill of busing.

But it has proved to be far easier to improve the schools than to integrate them; or, more precisely, it has been hard to improve them so much that whites will voluntarily enroll in a racially mixed inner-city school. Many urban schools are so debilitated and aimless that almost any form of attention helps. Replacing the traditional general school with a school for business management or the performing arts or languages or even military preparation often shocks an old institution into wakefulness. Students—and, in many cases, teachers—have volunteered to be there. The fact of free choice, like the fact of change, may be as important as the content of the choice or change. Choosing a school is a privilege usually reserved for the rich.

It isn't hard to see the attraction of such a system, especially in a country where virtually everything is supposed to pass muster in the marketplace. One may mourn the eclipse of the general school, and its sustaining vision of a common body of knowledge; but most magnets teach basic skills at least as thoroughly as traditional inner-city schools, where the liberal arts are often present in name only. Magnet schools may be a worthy innovation even if they don't desegregate the schools.

And if they don't? Vincent Franklin, a scholar at Yale who has studied the Philadelphia magnets, gets annoyed when he hears that they "failed" because they didn't attract whites. "The whole approach didn't fail," he insists, "if you look at the academic achievement of both the blacks and whites who attended." Yet this argument lands one at the doorstep of the old separate-but-equal heresy. Is the highest aspiration of the magnet idea, and school enrichment generally, to provide quality schooling in a segregated setting? An increasing number of black parents seem ready to acquiesce to this notion; whites, of course, always have been. But it is here that Buffalo's subtle harmony comes in. Magnet schools and the spirit of volition which they carry, it seems to say, can change the atmosphere of a school system; and within this new atmosphere, parents may accept mandatory desegregtion with a grace that scarcely seemed possible before.

IN THE MID-1970s Buffalo's children received an education that was both segregated and mediocre. In 1977 third grade reading scores stood at the state's 34th percentile. (Two-thirds of New York State's children, that is, did better.) Sixth graders occupied the 25th percentile in math. And to make matters worse, the previous year Federal Judge John T. Curtin had ordered the city to devise a plan to desegregate the schools.

Most cities have responded to the gavel in one of two ways. Those with liberal governments, like Boston, have generally done as they were told, unloading a comprehensive busing plan on an often enraged citizenry. More conservative cities, like Chicago, have ducked and dived and begged for time until most of the whites have left town, at which point desegregation becomes moot. Buffalo did neither. It decided to undertake what Associate Superintendent Joseph Murray calls "a massive job of persuasion" of the largely hostile community. It then restructured the schools along lines that would both desegregate them and bring them into conformity with the parents' goals for their children.

It was a compact that had to do not with legal sanction

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but with sincerity—the city's sincerity in remaking the schools and showing no favorites, the parents', in submitting to Buffalo's vision of the common good. At the outset racial violence, in the style which Boston had just made famous, seemed inevitable. But the city's ingenuity in giving parents what they asked for, in the integrated setting which they did not necessarily ask for, carried the day. Murray is especially proud of the school board's success in closing one of the most hardened all white schools and one of the most hardened all black schools and reopening the black school as Vocational Tech—a magnet which parents in both neighborhoods had requested. It then managed to coax working-class Irish into the formerly all black school in a black neighborhood.

In the following years parents did not block school entrances, and the city did not stall. Unlike many cities which toyed with school enrichment, Buffalo took a flail, not a butter knife, to its schools. The school board established a number of new schools to concentrate on the needs of children from prekindergarten to the third grade, and abolished the junior highs in order to place children in "that difficult phase" with younger and older students. Old schools were emptied to make way for magnets. Racially segregated schools were closed or blended together, and students were sent around the city. By this fall all but one of the seventeen magnet schools (the Hispanic one) had a population half white and half minority; and all but four of the city's schools met Judge Curtin's standard that they enroll at least 30 percent, but not more than 65 percent, minority students. Few other cities with an equally large school population (forty-seven thousand, 54 percent minority) could make such a claim.

WATERFRONT SCHOOL, BUFFALO, NEW YORK. PHOTO BY HARASTY.

The magnets, in their splendid variety, demonstrate that virtually all of the competing educational theories of the last twenty years are correct, if not entirely correct, when applied with a careful hand. Buffalo has, among others, a traditional school and an open school, a Montessori school and a computer-based school, a bilingual school and a Native American school (so far, no finishing school or yeshiva). Most of these schools have waiting lists, and even the loftiest citizens of Buffalo (save the Catholic school diehards) are happy to send a child to the honors or the performing arts school.

This is not to say that the schools are necessarily afire with scholarly energy. The Buffalo Traditional School, for example, is a sort of civilian military academy where cadets are raised on a stern diet of discipline and basic skills. The school has a dress code as long as your arm ("no high heels without backstraps"), and adults shepherd students through the halls from one class to the next, where they must line up and await the teacher. As in many other inner-city high schools, classroom discussion is desultory, and a half-dozen randomly selected English papers written by seniors bore few signs of literacy.

But the surliness of students and the frustration of staff that pervade such schools seems to be absent here. The attendance and graduation rates are high, if the SAT scores are not. And the school is integrated beyond reproach. Robert Bowles, a black student who graduated last year, said he had left Traditional in the ninth grade. "But I had to come back. I had forgotten about race. Over there it meant something that I was black. Here black and white are invisible."

Across town, the Waterfront School (kindergarten through eighth grade) is as distinctive for its atmosphere of harmony and warmth as Traditional is for its disciplinary fervor. In this elegant "school without walls," the doors are not locked, the gym and home ec classes are coed, and even four-year-olds walk around unattended. The school is abuzz with moms and dads who drop in to have lunch or to help out. I asked four of them why they sent their children to Waterfront. One mentioned the school's atmosphere. The second, whose son has a learning disability, its promotion and self-reliance. The third, the school's seamless integration of races as well as classes. The fourth, who had no particular interest in progressive education, expected his son to benefit from the school's reading and math program.

Why can't everyone do what Buffalo has done and consign forced busing to the dustbin of history? The first answer is that other cities don't try hard enough. Buffalo waved its court order at anyone who stood in the way of its drastic reforms—a tightfisted city council as well as recalcitrant parents. Other cities do not take this precipitous plunge; they rename their schools rather than reinvent them. Or, like Philadelphia and Chicago, they toss a few magnet schools into the usual broth and throw

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up their hands when a melting pot doesn't materialize. Or, like Houston and Dallas, they declare victory when the schools are enriched, even though they are scarcely enriched with white students.

But there is a more fundamental problem: truly "voluntary" desegregation, that totem raised by the Reagan Administration, does not work. Even in Buffalo, 15 percent of the students must be mandatorily reassigned to achieve the judge's criteria for racial balance. The problem, simply stated, is that large numbers of white parents cannot be persuaded to send their children to all black schools. Virtually every serious scholar agrees with the finding of Abt, Inc., a management consulting firm which published a study in 1979 on magnet schools, that they "are not effective as the primary or solitary means of desegregation." Any of a dozen cities offer proof of this conclusion. From 1975 to 1980 St. Louis had a wholly voluntary desegregation plan depending on magnets. The schools attracted so few whites that the city was forced to develop a new plan under which white suburban schools have agreed to accept a fixed percentage of inner-city minority students over the next five years. Inner-city magnets continue to play a major role in the plan, though nobody expects them to attract large numbers of suburban whites.

Well, some people do—the Reagan Administration, for one. Since 1981, the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division has stopped pressing cities to desegregate the schools by whatever means necessary, looking instead for negotiated settlements limited to voluntary means. Busing, William Bradford Reynolds declares dramatically, has "created a lost generation educationally." Numerical quotas, such as those Judge Curtin has devised, are "what we've been fighting in this country for years." Anyway, he adds, compulsion is unnecessary. He is asked to name one place where voluntary programs have done the job. Chicago, he says after a pause, has taken some "very positive" steps. Yet 82 percent of Chicago's black elementary school students attend schools with no white students at all. According to Gary Orfield, a scholar of desegregation at the University of Chicago, the city "hasn't even fulfilled its separate-but-equal responsibilities."

What was difficult for Buffalo will prove far more painful in larger cities, and may be unattainable in Chicago and a few others. Yet Buffalo's example proves that desegregation need not be a perpetual dark drama of compulsion and surly compliance. Black and white parents, it has become axiomatic to say, want the same thing—a good education for their children. Educators who mine this universal ambition may find there something that will improve the schools, and maybe even integrate them as well.

JAMES TRAUB

James Traub is a New York-based writer who writes frequently on education.

EDUCATION '83

WHY JONATHAN CAN'T READ

THE CRISIS of literacy is no fiction. Most young Americans now complete high school and at least attend college, yet few can read and write with a sophistication sufficient to justify twelve to sixteen years of schooling. At even the most elite colleges, a low standard of reading and writing among entering freshmen has come to be taken for granted.

Over the past decade, young Americans' command of English has consistently declined, from a standard that was none too spectacular to begin with. In 1973, 69 percent of 13-year-olds were able to write a "persuasive" letter as defined by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, mandated by Congress to monitor educational attainment around the nation; in 1978, 64 percent could demonstrate this very basic and trivial example of command of written language.

As studies by the National Assessment and by John Goodlad, the author of *A Place Called School*, have shown, little writing is demanded of pupils in elementary and secondary school. The emphasis, in Goodlad's words, is on "mechanics—capitalization, punctuation, paragraphs, syllabication, synonyms, homonyms, antonyms, parts of speech—if teachers gave tests involving writing paragraphs or essays, they seldom so indicated." Tests ask students merely for single words or short answers—identifications, "circle-the-verb" requests, and the like. The result is that pupils don't develop the habit of commanding language to express complex feelings or ideas, either in speech or in writing.

Ernest Boyer's recent Carnegie Commission report on the American high school found that in language skills many students "come to high school pathetically ill prepared." Since students have not yet learned to read and write adequately by the ninth grade, Boyer concludes that literacy, broadly defined, must be the high school's "first curriculum priority" and that "every student—not just those with problems—should learn to write more clearly, read with greater comprehension, listen with more discrimination, speak with more precision, and, through critical thinking, develop the capacity to apply old knowledge to new concepts."

Broadly speaking, the press and public have defined the problem to be the result of bad teachers, lack of discipline, and "innovative" pedagogical gimmicks left over from the 1960s, and the solution to be a simple matter of getting down to the disciplined teaching of the "basics." If this way of framing the issue persists, a crucial opportunity will be missed precisely when the public is most concerned and the politicians most ready to act. As Goodlad discovered, a peculiarly vengeful dose of "basics" is all

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that seems to go on in English classes: a perennial cycle of learning how to label components in our language, but not how to use them. The National Assessment's study of writing samples of 13- to 17-year-olds from 1969 to 1979 did *not* show substantial changes in the frequency of basic mechanical errors. The measurable declines appeared, rather, in the use of language to reason and write effectively. What little writing is assigned is rarely carefully corrected; cursory comments at the end of essays are the rule. Teachers, as recommendations for college applicants reveal, often have troubles of their own with writing.

In a purely functional sense, most Americans seem literate enough; they shop by mail, pay income tax, remain employed or file for unemployment benefits, purchase newspapers and magazines, connect pictures with words in television ads, read road signs. What isn't generally learned in school, or discovered on account of school, is to use language to think, to employ it to capture perceptions and beliefs. In 1981, the supervisor of English of the Kingston, New York, school system wrote to colleges inquiring whether the skill of writing formal expository prose was still essential and desired in college. "Neither I nor anyone else in the department," the inquirer informed us, "believes that the ability to do formal papers is a major purpose of English instruction."

A common thread links the overt illiteracy found in the worst and most deprived schools to a more sophisticated illiteracy found among Ivy League-bound suburban grade-grubbers. The "good" students we encounter can manipulate parts of speech. They make few errors and write clean, tidy essays with topic sentences and conclusions. They hand in all the assignments and yet say nothing in their writing. For them, using language is a school-specific skill, a game to be mastered but to which they have little emotional or intellectual attachment. Writing and reading are rarely facets of out-of-school life—or of life beyond school.

Increasingly, language has been broken down into functional sub-languages, each specific to some profession, career, industry, or bureaucracy. Gifted students can learn how to manipulate these utilitarian sub-languages, which may be compared to the standardized parts and machinery of industrialization. Literacy is reduced to the required acquisition of a job-specific minimal language. This technical skill does not necessarily translate into a desire or capacity for a common language adequate to the full range of public and private concerns. The consequence is that literacy, in Boyer's sense, does not emerge from the training of our most competitive and successful students, the future doctors, lawyers, and M.B.A.s. A grotesque symptom of this is the fact that two major New York law firms have found it necessary to give beginning lawyers—graduates of prestigious law schools, earning over $35,000, adept at juggling legal language—instruction in how to write ordinary, commonsense English.

Much of the current teaching of language in the schools reduces writing and reading to something as mechanical as using a pair of pliers. The teaching demands passive responses; workbooks are filled with "match column A with column B" quizzes, true-false statements, naming exercises, crossword puzzles, trick questions in multiple-choice formats. Twelve-year-olds are asked to negotiate a maze of single-word questions and traps, or to respond to a rehash of a textbook's banal generalizations, a feat which can be done merely by locating key phrases in the text and matching them to set questions. What these kids are *not* asked to do is to re-create what they have learned in their own words, or to raise questions *in writing* about history or

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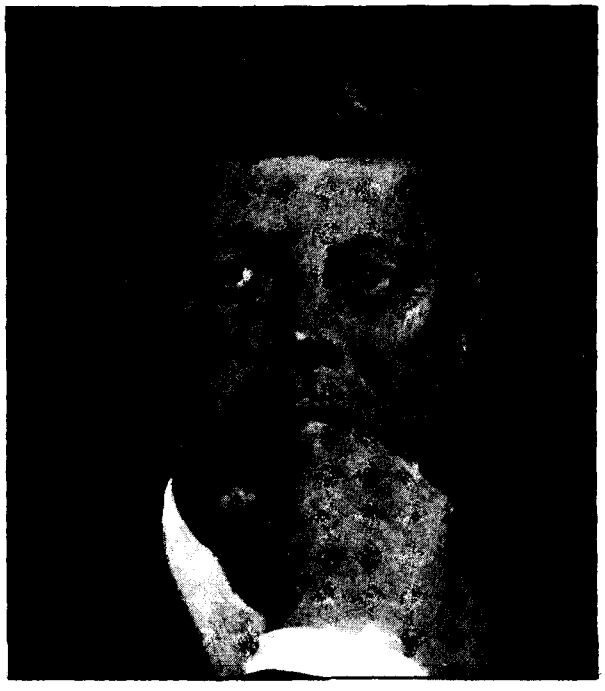
James Wyeth

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geography. Instead, reading and writing become code-breaking enterprises: the routine search for formulaic answers to formulaic questions. No wonder entering college students show so little skill or confidence in using language to express thoughts of their own.

The solution to this dilemma, from grade school to college, starts with the recognition that language and thinking are inseparable. Granting that premise, teachers at all levels must teach writing through its constant and active use. As a start, they must be able to write and actually do so themselves. They should demonstrate regularly to their pupils their own desire and capacity to make arguments, defend ideas, and criticize through writing. One program that has helped put this principle into effect is the National Writing Project, which oversees 103 summer seminars in which teachers from all disciplines and grade levels study at universities to learn how to teach writing effectively, and then go back and work with teachers in their own school districts. English and history teachers—not to mention math and biology teachers—who had shunned essay assignments return to the classroom prepared to ask their students to keep journals, and write poetry, first-person narratives, discursive essays, and newspaper editorials.

The keeping of journals and diaries, the daily discipline of jotting down one's thoughts—without an initial concern for technical correctness—leads to the realization that written thoughts breed further ideas, that one rarely knows precisely what one thinks before one tries to formulate it. Constant practice—daily writing of papers, editing, rewriting, and teacher correction—should begin in grade school and continue every day for the entire length of schooling. The starting point for writing ought to be, particularly in the lower grades, everyday thoughts and feelings. The teacher can help children expand on their rich fund of emotions and interests—their excuses, promises, disappointments, wishes, apologies—and gradually demonstrate how simple written use of language leads to complex perceptions and questions, which in turn can be discussed and extended.

The challenge to—and the burden on—the teacher will be enormous. But there is no substitute for the regular writing of prose compositions which are corrected carefully, with attention to the interaction of content with the mechanics of language. The will and capacity to fill a blank piece of paper intelligently can emerge only from constant writing, not from checking off right answers.

Since a critical literate sensibility is a function of habit and self-confidence in the use of language and argument, no classroom should be without the teaching of oral debate. Children should be able to do more than raise their hands to give right answers. Pupils should be taught to present longer statements and defend ideas beyond the mere assertion of belief. As Robert Fogelin, who teaches philosophy at Dartmouth, puts it, thinking—and using language to make and defend claims—is a contact sport. The contact must be spoken as well as written.

Without a radical revolution in how we teach writing and reading, all that may emerge from the current frenzy of educational panic is political rhetoric. We may end up with computers on the desks of kids who can't command ordinary language, facing teachers incapable of challenging the alienation from language at the root of today's crisis of literacy. Ironically, for all their murky, mushy notions, the much-maligned critics and reformers of the '60s and '70s—John Holt, Herbert Kohl, Jonathan Kozol, Charles Silberman—were correct in arguing that something fundamental had to be altered in the schools. This perception applies today precisely to the intellectual core of schooling: the task of turning schoolchildren and college students into active, sophisticated readers and writers. Invoking a fictitious model of schoolhouse rigor and simplicity from the past won't do. In this moment of national soul searching about education, we have a real chance to encourage a generation of citizens to write, to read, and to think.

LEON BOTSTEIN

Leon Botstein is president of Bard College and Simon's Rock, which runs the Ford Foundation-funded Institute for Writing and Thinking for high school and college teachers.

EDUCATION '83

MORRIS HIGH SCHOOL, CLASS OF '16

IN 1916, I lived on Charlotte Street in the South Bronx and graduated from Morris High School. Charlotte Street has since become a notorious symbol of urban decay, and Morris High School has shared in the decline of the public school system. Yet I remember Charlotte Street as a pleasant block of small apartment houses, walk-ups, surrounded by unlittered lots bright with dandelions in the spring. Nearby Crotona Park was a safe, green playground and a place for picnics on summer days. Morris—a good twenty minutes' walk (nobody on my block squandered five cents for a trolley ride, whatever the weather)—had pupils of heterogeneous, largely immigrant background and teachers whose proficiency few ventured to question.

The other day I came across the Annual of my graduating class. It turned out to be a less grandiose publication than I, the literary editor, had remembered. A bewilderingly large editorial staff, forty names in all, had produced a modest book, unlike the hefty volumes put out by high schools today. Instead of featuring individual pictures of beaming graduates, space had been saved by substituting group photographs of the athletic clubs and numerous

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literary and scientific societies with fancy Greek names. Most of my classmates can be found among the rows of girls in discreet middy blouses and well-combed boys in neat suits.

But if the format is unimpressive, the literacy (if not originality) of the contents is striking. The adolescent poets may have assimilated Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* too obviously: rhymed quatrains, ballads, and iambic pentameters were the preferred forms. And the satire of the prose may not be as deadly or its pathos as affecting as it seemed in 1916, but the writers were not strangers to the world of books. The contributions are in Latin, French, and German, in addition to English—reflecting the obligatory requirement of two foreign languages in the high school curriculum. Judging from a tolerable parody of Virgil and recurrent witticisms about Cicero, a sizable number must have chosen Latin as one of the required languages. The polished French and German contributions imply that some of the writers had the advantage of home instruction, but nobody prattled in Latin on Charlotte Street. If the editors devoted precious pages to foreign language entries, it was because we assumed that most of the graduating class would find them intelligible.

PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MORRIS ANNUAL'S BOARD OF EDITORS, '16. MARIE SYRKIN IS SEATED IN THE SECOND ROW.

There was no lack of social consciousness. With the United States still at peace, the poets mourned the destruction raging in Europe. In fact, so many poems on the horrors of war had been submitted that the editor in chief had begged to be delivered from more on the theme. One sprightly prose sketch describes how two friends, close as Damon and Pythias yet divided by conflicting sympathies for England and Germany, were patriotically reconciled by the "Proclamation of the Neutrality of the People of these United States." (The author ended up as a federal judge.) The annual oratorical contest also reflects the pervasive concern with World War I. Five of the eight contestants declaimed about the war; one offered a plea for the Illiterate Immigrant. The winner was a quiet boy none of us was sufficiently clairvoyant to pick as the one most likely to succeed: Armand Hammer, whose theme was "The Last War of Mankind."

Apart from the nostalgia evoked by a glimpse of my youth, the Annual brought sharply to mind the deterioration of the public school system. Many members of my class, children of poor immigrants, would today be called economically disadvantaged. They came from homes completely ignorant of English. Upon admission to elementary school, these youngsters had been unceremoniously plunged into an English-speaking environment, with no benefit of special instruction. By the time of graduation from elementary school the gap between native and foreign-born had usually been closed.

The high level of performance in my high school may be partially explained by the fact that, since universal high school attendance was not taken for granted or compulsory in 1916, the high school population had already undergone a process of self-selection. But even the average eighth grader was expected to read *Julius Caesar* (and memorize "Friends, Romans, countrymen"), parse a sentence, spell correctly, and grapple with fractions. Were the earlier batch of elementary school kids brighter than the present lot? I doubt it. Other forces must be taken into account.

Another bit of memorabilia, unearthed with the Annual, throws further light on the denizens of Charlotte Street, those who did not go to high school as well as those who did. A moldering copy of *The Beacon*, March 1910, published by The Pupils of Public School No. 40, The Bronx, at five cents a copy, illustrates the relentless emphasis on the "work ethic" to which these children were subjected. Self-expression is regrettably absent. With a painstaking dullness tolerable only to the parents of the authors, the contributors discuss a camping trip, a visit to Loon Lake, and Strange Dishes People In America Never Eat. What is startling more than seventy years later is the pupils' uninhibited devotion to Effort, Proficiency, and Conduct, the three simple categories that used to appear on the monthly report card. From 1A to 8B each class reporter mourns lapses in behavior or celebrates scholastic triumphs: 3A rejoices in perfect attendance; the boys of 5A have improved in spelling and four girls have gotten straight A's; 5B is obliged to comment that "Baseball season has come and the boys are so busy getting on their gloves that they forget about trying for A's"; but 6A is able to take pride in many "A's and B pluses in conduct and effort." 8A concludes the roster with a mild criticism: "We are very sorry that no boy in our class received three A's in his report. But our girls were more fortunate (or better behaved) for three got A, A, A." Apparently the girls were a more steadfast

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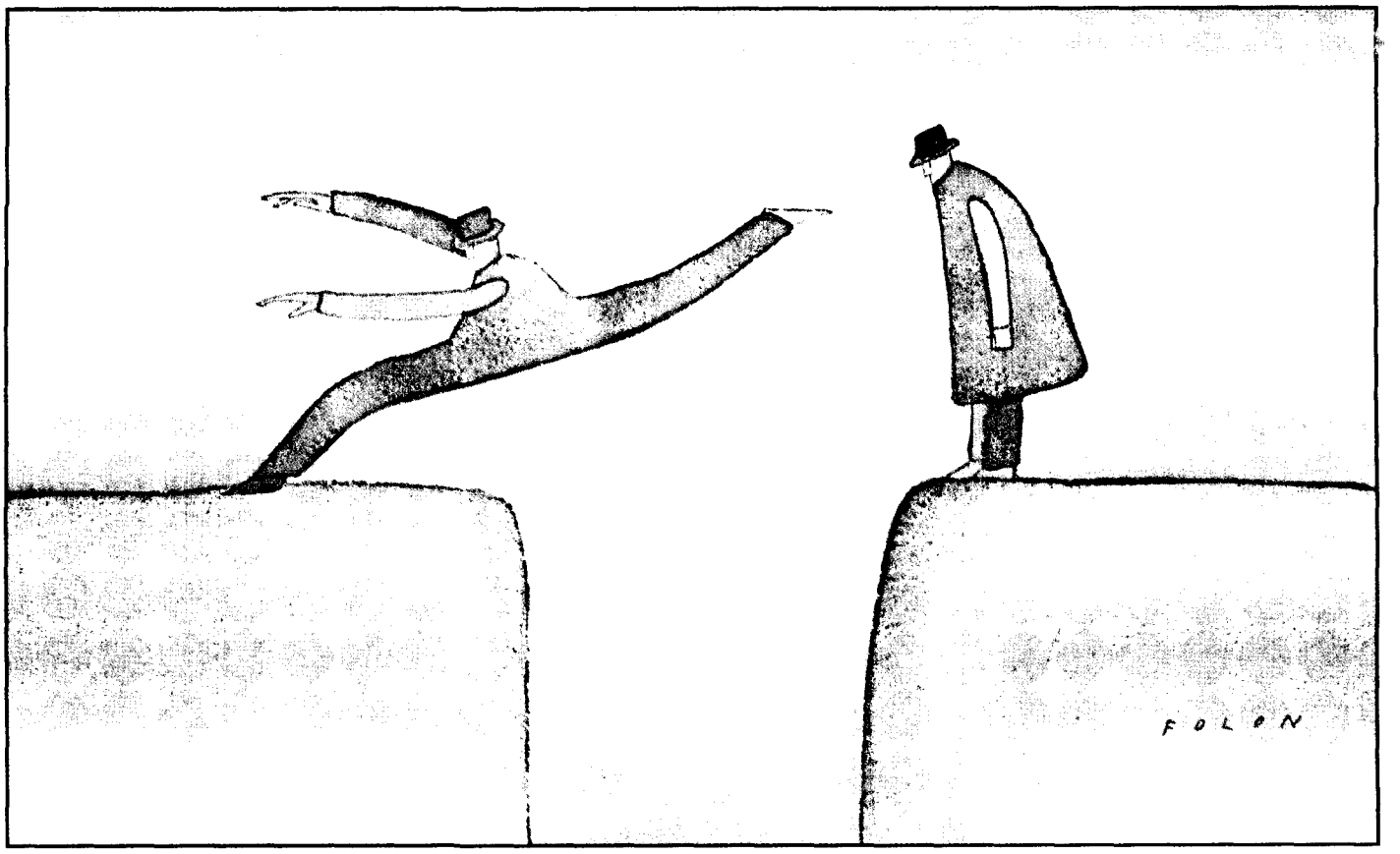
Are we being left behind?



Twenty-five countries now produce nuclear-generated electricity. Ten more plan to do so by the end of the decade. The international growth of this energy source raises questions about what, if anything, America stands to lose if we fall behind in nuclear energy development.

America helped pioneer the technology of the world's nuclear plants. Nuclear-generated electricity in the U.S. grew to a record 283 billion kilowatt-hours last year—close to 13 percent of the nation's total electricity production. Eighty-four plants are now licensed to operate across the country, and 56 more are being built. In terms of total nuclear electric generating capacity, America remains number one.

But since 1978, we have undergone a time of national hesitation. For five years now, no new nuclear power plants have been ordered in the U.S. During the same period, there have been orders for at least 40 such plants in other parts of the world, even with the global economic slump.

The international rise of nuclear electricity

France, the Soviet Union, and Japan are among the many countries committed to nuclear electricity as an economic, secure alternative to oil-fired and coal-fired power.

By 1985, over half of France's electricity will be nuclear-generated. The cost of producing a nuclear kilowatt-hour in France is 25 percent cheaper than with coal and 55 percent cheaper than with oil. It takes only six years or so to get a nuclear plant built there.

Belgium, Finland, France, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and West Germany all generate a greater share of their electricity from nuclear power plants than the U.S.

Japan's ambitious nuclear construction program

When the 1973 oil embargo struck, over 80 percent of Japan's oil was coming from the Middle East. To reduce such vulnerability, Japan decided to accelerate its nuclear power program.

Japan now operates 25 nuclear units, and expects to double its nuclear capacity by 1990. Japanese companies are busy designing their own advanced reactors, and thus gaining the edge in nuclear energy technology.

And despite Japan's recent economic slowdown, there have been no cancellations of nuclear plants under construction there.

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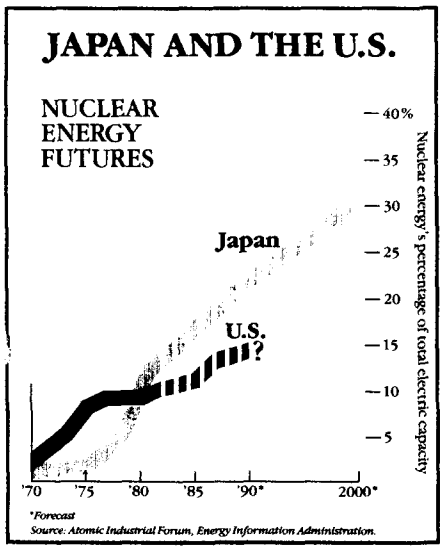


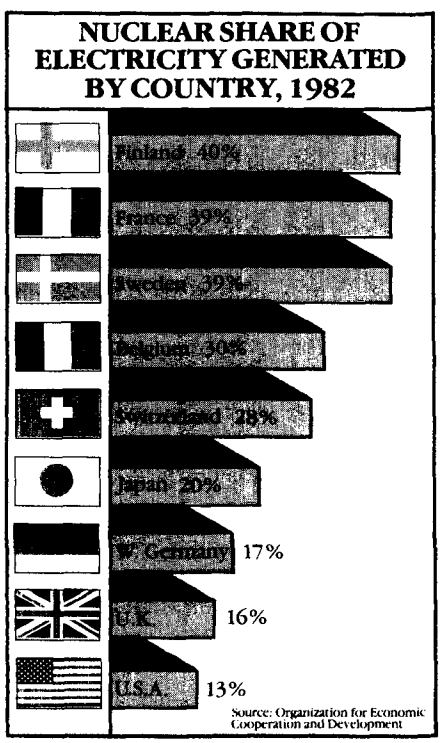
Japan now has a larger percentage of nuclear-electricity production capacity (as a share of total electricity production capacity) than does the U.S. And Japan's nuclear capacity is expected to grow rapidly.

A secure America needs a balanced mix of energy sources

This country has a lot more oil, natural gas, and coal than either France or Japan. But oil supplies are uncertain. Natural gas is more valuable for other uses than for burning in power plants. And coal, though essential, can't be expected to do the job alone.

Some of the renewable energy options are promising, but they're still drops in the national energy bucket.

What is best for the practical generation of large amounts of electricity? The National Academy of Sciences has stated that "Coal and nuclear power are the only economic alternatives for large-scale application in the remainder of this century."



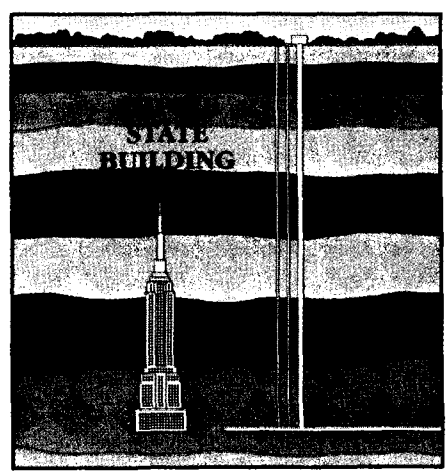
In many countries throughout the world, nuclear power is now supplying a substantial share of the electricity that people consume.

Highest safety standards and a U.S. plan for nuclear waste

The accident at Three Mile Island prompted reforms in safety, nuclear regulation, and plant operations. Since that time, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the utility industry itself have made nuclear energy the most carefully controlled technology in the country. It has one of the best safety records of any major industrial enterprise.

In 1979, U.S. nuclear electric utilities founded the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations. Based in Atlanta, INPO focuses on the human factor of nuclear plant safety. The Institute monitors plants in operation and under construction, and accredits operator training programs to assure that the highest standards are met.

Besides plant safety, another big concern has been nuclear waste. An important step toward solving the waste problem is the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982, signed into law early this year. The Act defines a timetable and Federal responsibility for the safe and permanent disposal of high-level waste, in deep geologic formations that have been stable for millions of years. In 1987, the President is to recommend to Congress the first U.S. disposal site.



The Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 directs the Federal government to begin the process leading to the permanent disposal of high-level nuclear waste, in deep geologic formations that have been stable for millions of years. These permanent repositories will be almost twice as deep as the Empire State Building is high.

The geologic disposal method has been judged the safest by many governments and scientific bodies. They agree that repositories deep underground can isolate the waste permanently. West Germany is now drilling to test the suitability of the salt formation at Gorleben. Canada's research and development is focusing on the ancient rock formations of the Canadian Shield plateau. And Switzerland favors disposal in rock far beneath the northern part of the Swiss lowlands.

The cost of not pushing ahead

Nuclear-generated electricity is a secure, dependable, economic energy source for millions of people in many different countries. And they plan to use more of it in the years to come.

As its use grows, nuclear electricity will help these countries strengthen their position in increasingly competitive world markets. They realize that a healthy national economy needs a healthy supply of energy.

Will we have to play a costly game of catch-up in the competition ahead? America runs the risk of doing just that—if we ignore the growing international reliance on nuclear energy, and the reasons behind that growth.

This is one in a continuing series of discussions about nuclear electricity. For a free booklet that covers the subject in more detail, just fill out this coupon and mail it to:

U.S. Committee for Energy Awareness
P.O. Box 37012
Washington, D.C. 20013

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lot. It should be noted, however, that standards for deportment bore no relationship to what today are euphemistically called discipline problems. Whispering or failing to sit quietly with hands folded on desk were serious infractions.

How was proficiency achieved? Daily drills in spelling, recitals of multiplication tables, and practice in arithmetic occupied a sizable segment of the school day. The mystery of learning to read was addressed by straightforward phonetic exercises in the school primer. By third grade most pupils had grasped the relationship between letters and sounds. By sixth grade classroom blackboards were decorated with elaborate diagrams of sentences, subjunctive clauses, and adverbial phrases, studied in formal grammar lessons. By then we had also progressed to literature. This meant Longfellow's "Hiawatha" and such hortatory lyrics as "Excelsior" and "The Psalm of Life." We zestfully recited, "Life is real, life is earnest," before going on to more taxing passages from Shakespeare in the eighth grade. I recall no teacher who went beyond the prescribed subject matter, but the graduates, many of whom went straight to work, could manage the three R's; imbued with uncritical reverence for the Founding Fathers, they had learned a sanitized version of the history of their country; and they possessed as initial cultural baggage a number of famous poems all were expected to know. Were the pupils stultified by these unimaginative techniques? I can only point that the accomplished teenagers who appeared in the 1916 Annual had come from P.S. 40 or similar schools in the general area of Charlotte Street.

Nor did fresh pedagogic winds blow in the high schools. In our English classes, instead of engaging in spirited discussions, we wrote compositions on assigned chapters of *The Odyssey* or *A Tale of Two Cities* on the blackboard, where it would be firmly reviewed for accurate information and proper sentence structure. In history we were held to a regime of dates and chronological events. Recitals of what had happened occupied more time than bold speculation; the latter was reserved for the Clio Club. Somehow this routine did not prevent the eager beavers and bright lights from reading widely and voraciously. In retrospect I find it hard to reconcile the genuine excitement of the school with the blandness of the instruction.

BY THE TIME I became an English teacher in a New York high school in the late 1920s, mechanical drills, as well as the peculiar abomination known as the Palmer Method of writing, were excoriated in every progressive pedagogy course. Formal grammar was abandoned. No self-respecting teacher would expect a pupil to "parse"—archaic word—a sentence. Our credo was the noble summons of John Dewey: "To imposition from above is opposed expression and cultivation of individuality; to external discipline is opposed free activity; to learning from texts and teachers, learning through experience. . . ." We implored our pupils to offer their opinions on everything under the sun. "Relate it to life," no matter how unlikely the relationship, was a holy tenet, and "I'm not interested" was the damning criticism from which there was no appeal.

I have no wish to rehash the familiar arguments in the unending debate among theorists and practitioners of education, except to note that in the clash over goals and methods one point of agreement has remained constant: Johnny's performance is steadily declining. In 1943 the New York State Board of Regents issued a dismaying report about the deficiencies of high school students. In each succeeding decade the deficiencies have become graver and the numbers deficient larger, with the tragicomic result that now alarmed attention is focused on college freshmen unable to read and write on an eighth grade level.

I AM NOT so smug or simpleminded as to suggest that salvation lies in a return to the orderly routine of P.S. 40 or to the unwavering requirements of the Morris High of my day. New factors, both positive and negative, have altered the expectations of teachers and pupils alike. The social and demographic revolution of the '60s engulfed the schools as well as the streets of American cities; no one can look at a newspaper photograph of a shocked President Carter or President Reagan surveying the devastation of contemporary Charlotte Street and pretend that the young people reared in these crumbling tenements are not the victims of far-reaching deprivations from which the poor, immigrant families I knew were largely exempt. To make the situation worse, the school system's effectiveness has been deliberately eroded by a pseudo-egalitarian social philosophy according to whose planks educators—white, black, and Hispanic—could seriously protest the school's effort "to impose middle-class values"—the derided work ethic, punctuality, standard English, discipline, and other suspect virtues, including "politeness"—on minority children. Fortunately there has been a partial retreat from these excesses.

The report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk*, deplores falling test scores and demands the stiffening of the curriculum at every level—the usual litany. It is an illusion to believe that such a result can be achieved by fiat. A prerequisite to any meaningful reformation of the public school system lies in attaining a consensus as to the school's primary function and proper role in a democratic society. If the schools continue to be the arena for competing group interests in which education is submerged in a welter of conflicting social aims, if the schools are to become bastions of ethnic identities with bilingual instruction demanded not for students to learn English but to perpetuate racial and ethnic enclaves, then there is little hope for any fundamental improvement. Inevitably in such a climate, the validity of subjects and tests will be judged not by individual accomplishment but by the numerical success of given groups in meeting mandatory standards.

The public school is not able to assume society's burden of righting past wrongs or present inequities; nor should it be deflected into fostering various cultural-national pur-

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poses. Like religion, that is the business of the home. Within its legitimate province, the school has the ambitious task of trying to give its charges an equal chance to advance to the full range of their abilities, a large order. Progressive education bade us to teach the child, not the subject. We have learned that we must teach the child *and* the subject. The social revolution has made us aware of the deep traumas with which many of our young come to the classroom. We have learned that though they cannot be ignored, healing will not be promoted by accepting symptoms of social pathology as norms.

I return to Charlotte Street. The enchantment of P.S. 40 youngsters with Effort, Proficiency, and Conduct, and the zeal of my Morris High classmates, should not be dismissed as false "middle-class values," alien to much of the present student body in urban centers. Few of my companions on Charlotte Street were middle class. I admit, however, that *values*—neither pretentiously absolute nor apologetically relative—existed. They served as checks on behavior and goads to aspiration. I suspect that they matter as much in the final result as the useful daily drills and foreign languages.

MARIE SYRKIN

Marie Syrkin is professor emerita of humanities at Brandeis University. She is the author of *Your School, Your Children* (L.B. Fischer), a study of the New York public school system.

EDUCATION '83

SCAPEGOATING THE TEACHERS

THE MOST common response to the current crisis in education has been to assail public school teachers. Not only are they incompetent, goes the charge, but good people have abandoned or are shunning the teaching profession. Teacher competency tests, which have spread during the past five years to some three dozen states, have produced embarrassing results in many districts; for example, when a third of Houston's teachers took a competency test, 62 percent failed the reading section and 46 percent failed the mathematics section (and the scores of hundreds of other teachers were ruled invalid because of teacher cheating). Those who major in education in college tend to have below-average grades in high school and lower scores on their SATs than the already depressed national average (in 1982, the national average on the SAT-verbal was 426, while the average for those planning to major in education was only 394).

This state of affairs has prompted a plethora of proposals. Some call for merit pay. Others call for increased salaries across the board. To some reformers, the answer lies with the designation of master teachers or with the promotion of more doctorate degrees in educational practice. Still others argue that the teacher problem would be ameliorated by abolishing schools of education.

THE PROBLEM of teacher competence is serious, since there is no chance that the schools will improve unless the teachers know more than the students do. Yet the rush to attack teachers and teacher education programs smacks more than a little of scapegoating. Teachers did not singlehandedly cause the debasement of educational standards, and their preparation is better today than it was twenty years ago, when test scores began to fall. Though we now look back to 1962-63 as the golden age of student achievement, these years coincided with the publication of two major critiques of teacher education, James Koerner's *The Miseducation of American Teachers* and James B. Conant's *The Education of American Teachers*. Teachers, it seems, can't win: when scores go down, they are to blame; when scores are high, they get no credit.

It is comforting to blame teachers for the low state of education, because it relieves so many others of their own responsibility for many years of educational neglect.

—Why not blame the colleges and universities for lowering entrance requirements, thus undermining high school graduation requirements? Why not blame them for accepting hordes of semiliterate students and establishing massive remedial programs, instead of complaining to the high schools that gave diplomas to the uneducated?

—Why not blame businesses and employers, who set up multimillion-dollar programs to teach basic skills to their work force instead of telling the public, the school boards, and the legislatures that the schools were sending them uneducated people? Why didn't representatives of major employers—like the telephone company and the banks—join forces to demand improved education?

—Why not blame state legislatures, which quietly diluted or abolished high school graduation requirements? Why were they willing to pile on new requirements for nonacademic courses (drug education, family life education, consumer education, etc.) while cutting the ground away from science, math, history, and foreign languages?

—Why not blame the press, which has been indifferent to educational issues, interested only in fads, and unaware of the steady deterioration of academic standards until a national commission captured its attention?

—Why not blame the federal government, which has toyed with the curriculum and introduced programs, regulations, and practices that narrowed the teacher's professional autonomy in the classroom?

—Why not blame the courts, which have whittled away the schools' ability to maintain safety and order? (Several weeks ago, the New Jersey Supreme Court invalidated evidence that students were selling drugs in junior high, because the drugs had been illegally seized in one student's purse and in another student's locker—the court's

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decision that the students' right to privacy outweighed the school's obligation to maintain order nullified the school's obligation to act in loco parentis.)

With so many guilty parties still at large, it should be clear why almost everyone seems eager to pin responsibility on the teachers for the bad news about the schools. The reality is that teachers should be seen not as perpetrators of the deleterious trends in the schools, but as victims of them. As teaching conditions worsen, it is teachers who suffer the consequences. When judges rule that disruptive youths cannot be suspended, it is teachers who must lock their classroom door and worry about being assaulted.

JUST AS SERIOUS as the problem of teacher competence is the state of the teaching profession. Some teachers insist bitterly that teaching is no longer a profession, but has been reduced to a civil service job. Other professionals are subject to entry tests and to supervision by senior professionals, but they usually retain a large measure of control over where they work and how they perform their duties; in teaching, governmental agencies and policymakers have bureaucratized hiring practices, curriculum development, student placement, and other areas that once engaged the experience and participation of teachers. The effort to make schools "teacher-proof" ends by making the teachers technical functionaries, implementing remotely designed policies. With so many laws and regulations and interest groups on the scene, wise teachers look for protection to the rulebook, their union, their lawyer, or to some job with more dignity. For the person who simply wants to teach history or literature, the school has not been a receptive workplace.

In response to declining enrollments and worsening working conditions, the number of people who want to be teachers has dropped sharply over the past decade. The number of undergraduate degrees awarded in education reached a peak of two hundred thousand in 1973, when they were 21 percent of all bachelor's degrees awarded in the nation, but have dropped to only one hundred and eight thousand in 1981, fewer than 12 percent of all bachelor's degrees awarded. The tight job market has meant not only a decline in the number preparing to teach, but a decline in the ability of those who want to teach. Apparently the brighter students were smart enough to pick another field, and the flight of academically talented women to other fields has particularly depressed the quality of the pool of would-be teachers. The low starting salary for teachers is undoubtedly a factor in shrinking the pool: a college graduate with a bachelor's degree in mathematics would get a starting salary in teaching of about $13,000, while the same person would receive about $17,000 as an accountant in private industry.

The outlook for a better pool in the future is not very promising. In the fall of 1970, 19 percent of college freshmen said that they wanted to teach in elementary or secondary school. A year ago, less than 5 percent of college freshmen expressed the same ambition. Less than 2 percent wanted to teach in high school, a choice that was doubtless informed by their own recent observation of the life of high school teachers.

Would reforms in teacher education help the situation? For years, critics of education have heaped scorn on schools of education and on the required education courses that prospective teachers must take. Thirty years ago, critics like Arthur Bestor and Mortimer Smith charged that entry to the teaching profession was controlled by an "interlocking directorate" made up of schools of education, bureaucrats in state education departments, and teacher associations, and that the hurdles these groups erected (such as "Mickey Mouse" courses in educational theory and methods) excluded talented people from the public schools. Since the early 1950s was a time of baby boom and teacher shortage, nothing much came of the grumbling, and the agencies of certification and accreditation are, if anything, even more powerful today.

YET SCHOOLS of education are not solely responsible for the intellectual inadequacies of those entering teaching. The important fact to bear in mind about students preparing to teach is that they take most of their courses outside of the undergraduate education department. Would-be high school teachers take only about 20 percent of their courses in education, and would-be elementary teachers take about 40 percent of their courses in education. If their academic preparation is deficient, the fault lies with the arts and sciences faculties.

Even though education majors take most of their courses outside the education department, it would be preferable if there were no education majors at the undergraduate level, if every would-be teacher majored in some subject or combination of subjects. As matters now stand, the one hundred and eight thousand bachelor's degrees in education awarded in 1981 were divided up among students preparing to be elementary teachers (35 percent), physical education teachers (17 percent), special education teachers (13 percent), and teachers of such specialized areas as home economics, vocational education, prekindergarten instruction, and health education. Less than 3 percent of the education degrees went to secondary teachers, which suggests (happily) that those who want to teach in high school take their Bachelor of Arts degrees in the subjects they want to teach and get their education credits on the side or in graduate school.

Elementary teachers need a wide preparation, since they will be teaching reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, art, and music. But they can take the courses in how to teach these subjects to young children while majoring in a discipline or combination of disciplines. The case for requiring physical education instructors to major in a subject area is even stronger, because a large number of them teach their minor subject (usually social studies) and end up as high school principals.

Since prospective secondary teachers rarely major in education in college, they do not get counted or measured by the researchers who examine the quality of the teaching pool. In most studies and government reports, statistics

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are gathered only for those who major in education in college. Thus the numbers that are tossed about refer *only* to those who are academically weakest. In fact, when we are warned about the onrushing tide of incompetent teachers, we are hearing only about the coaches, the school nurses, the elementary school teachers, and the shop teachers, but not the would-be teachers of history, the sciences, English, and mathematics. We should still be concerned, particularly about the low academic ability of those who are supposed to teach young children the basic skills and impart to them their attitudes toward learning, but we should recognize that the data are biased.

GRADUATE SCHOOLS of education have shown little interest in training teachers. Some professors and programs involve themselves with the public schools, but most of these institutions emphasize research and the training of educational administrators. Because they are parts of universities, their concept of status derives from the traditional academic model. They have low status within the university, which considers the graduate school of education little better than a vocational school.

Yet the graduate school has a useful role to play. In particular, it cares about education, which is one of the major social and economic activities in the nation. This sets it apart from the rest of the university, which tends to look down upon any interest in or involvement with the public schools. Just last summer, however, the presidents of Harvard and Stanford met with leading university presidents and their education deans to discuss how to help the schools and how to overcome the traditional snobbery that has kept the "ed" schools out of the academic mainstream. Whether this resolve is translated from rhetoric into programmatic commitments remains to be seen.

Perhaps a personal note at this point will explain my own bias. In 1972, when I had been out of college for a dozen years, I decided to get a Ph.D. in history while writing a political history of the New York City public schools. I approached a young history professor at Columbia, who told me that I was a bad bet for his department: "You have three strikes against you," he said. "First, you are a woman; second, you are more than ten years away from your B.A.; and third, you are interested in education." At Teachers College, the graduate school of education at Columbia, none of those characteristics was considered a handicap, and I pursued my studies there. This lack of interest in elementary and secondary schooling and in education as a profession and as a research field is typical of major research universities.

The present crisis in education and the depressed condition of the teaching profession offer an unusual opportunity to reassess our present arrangements for preparing teachers. As Gary Sykes, until recently the National Institute of Education's specialist on the teaching profession, has observed, the profession needs both "screens and magnets," ways to keep out incompetent teachers and ways to lure in the highly talented. The traditional screen—state certification—is almost entirely ineffective, since it guarantees only that a prospective teacher has taken required courses and received a degree. Recognizing that a college degree today certifies very little, a number of states have begun to adopt teacher examinations and to reassess their requirements for entry into the profession. If school boards and state legislatures were to raise their hiring standards—to insist that new teachers have an undergraduate major other than education, for instance, and to determine whether the education courses they require are valuable—the message of the marketplace would be heeded by institutions that prepare teachers.

Developing magnets to attract good people to teaching will be far more difficult. It must involve better pay, so that a life of teaching is not equivalent to an oath of penury. It may or may not involve some form of salary differentiation for teachers who win the respect and admiration of their peers, but some salary incentives should be available to keep gifted teachers in the classroom. It should involve generous public fellowships to underwrite the education of those willing to commit themselves to the classroom for several years. It should mean a readiness by school boards to provide teachers with opportunities for continuing intellectual and professional growth. It should mean a flexibility by teachers' unions to permit the employment of graduate students in science and mathematics, college-educated housewives, and professional writers to meet critical shortages on a temporary or part-time basis. It requires a willingness by education officials to defend the teacher's professional autonomy and to preserve a climate in the schools that honors teaching and learning.

Like every other educational problem, the difficulty of attracting top-flight people to teaching will not yield to simple solutions. Demography contributed to the problem; smart people looked for other jobs as enrollments declined. But demography may help ease the problem, as enrollments begin to grow again, increasing the demand for new teachers. The opening of other career opportunities has shrunk the talent pool, but teaching will continue to be an attractive occupation for those who wish to combine a career with family responsibilities.

As a mass, public profession, teaching will never offer salaries that compare favorably with law or medicine, but it does offer satisfactions that are unique to the job. In every generation, there are people born with a love of teaching. They want to open the minds of young people to literature, history, art, science, or something else that has seized their imagination. To recruit and hold onto such people, the nation's schools must not only reward them adequately but must provide the conditions in which good teaching can flourish. That will not come about through public incantations; it will demand realistic programs and imaginative solutions. But a nation that has led the world in popular education for more than a century owes it to itself to meet the challenge.

DIANE RAVITCH

Diane Ravitch's latest book is *The Troubled Crusade* (Basic).

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Some Energy, Some Entropy

If there were no Godard, it would be necessary to invent him. This would be difficult because he invented himself, and he is the only one equipped for the job. He has a unique position in the film world, and the more exceptional that position becomes, the more the film

Passion
(Zoetrope Studios/
United Artists Classics)

Rumble Fish
(Zoetrope Studios/Universal)

world needs him. Since he first became visible some twenty-five years ago, he has fashioned an idiosyncratic career, making films for one reason only: personal need. Some of those films, especially in the 1960s, seemed to me exhibitionistic or self-indulgent or silly; some were fascinating, even beautiful; a few were fully achieved works of art. But increasingly, as the years rolled on, as Godard metamorphosed, I've become convinced that judgment of individual works is less relevant to Godard than to almost any other practicing filmmaker. What matters is his existence, his persistence, his imaginative anarchism within the film domain.

Other filmmakers have worked as long, as courageously, as freely, but none that I can think of has so consistently stirred up helpful insurrection at his level. (Miklós Jancsó tries but becomes increasingly hermetic.) Godard has purged himself of tricks and sensationalism, of avant-gardism for its own sake, and is now rather like an eccentric poet or painter living off on a hillside in a cabin somewhere and sending down works once in a while that cannot make the mainstream but are professionally valuable to some good people in that mainstream.

The paradox of this eccentric career is that, disruptive of the aesthetic status quo as it means to be, it is nevertheless adequately financed much of the time. If we're not talking about *Star Wars* budgets, neither are we talking about scratchy "underground" expedience. Godard's new film *Passion* is a coproduction of French and Swiss companies; the chief cinematographer is the illustrious Raoul Coutard (a Godard colleague of the past); the cast includes three big European stars, Isabelle Huppert, Hanna Schygulla, and Michel Piccoli, as well as the now-noted Polish actor Jerzy Radziwilowicz, who was in recent Wajda films. *Passion* could not have been done on an "underground" budget, yet Godard has made not the slightest concession to success. His new film is as completely concerned with what concerns *him* as any he has ever made. His financial road can't be smooth, but obviously he can, much of the time, enlist producers and eminent colleagues primarily because of their respect for him.

I suppose there's some hope of eventual profit from subsidiary uses of the film—among them, 16mm and cassettes—but no one could have signed on for *Passion* because he thought it was going to be an immediate theatrical hit. First, if Godard was running true to form, no complete script existed before shooting started, from which to make a judgment about success. Second, if there had been a script of the picture as it finally turned out, no one would have been commercially reassured by it. Now that the film *is* made, it's still hard to describe. It seems to center on the making of a TV film in Switzerland; and the TV film involves living-picture reproductions of some famous paintings. The TV film is being co-directed by two East Europeans, Jerzy and Laszlo. The latter is played by Laszlo Szabo: every character is called by the actor's own first name. Also involved are Hanna, who owns the motel where Jerzy is staying and who is having an affair with him; Michel, her husband, a factory owner; and Isabelle, who works on an assembly line in that factory. What the precise intent of the film is, what thematic or other shape these characters and incidents inscribe, I cannot say, and I disbelieve those who do say. Although everything in the film is sternly representational, I think the intent is abstract. To attempt analysis of this film is something like trying to treat a Picasso collage as if it were a Goya. I choose Goya because he is one of the artists whose paintings are made into tableaux, all of which are highly representational. The contrast between their intrinsic storytelling methods and Godard's method seems part of the film's point. But "point" itself is an inappropriate term: Godard explains nothing, ties up very little, merely moves around, watching his people, observing them at this moment or that, prizing this or that view of them or their environment. *Passion* is not a narrative about these people, it is a cinematic meditation on them and the places they are in.

Thus, for many of us conditioned by traditional films, eighty-seven minutes of *Passion* are not continuously gripping: they don't contain anything like eighty-seven minutes of passion. But the film is never dull-witted, always visually pleasurable, often comic, and occasionally startling in its juxtaposition of shots or its heterodox composition. An oddity about Godard's career for me

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Danton. French history reworked a bit transparently to fit Poland today, but it's Wajda's best-directed film, and Gerard Depardieu is overpowering in the lead.

The Grey Fox. As charming and strong as its hero. A former stagecoach bandit, released from prison in 1901 after thirty-three years, becomes a gallant train robber.

The Return of Martin Guerre. Depardieu again, differently excellent, in a sixteenth-century true story about a marital dilemma. First-class historical re-creation.

Zelig. Woody Allen, with another typically bright idea, another typically inchoate film. Zelig changes personae to please people—but to no story resolution.

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is that the further he departs from conventional narrative, the more completely he ignores convention, the more interesting he becomes.

During a press conference at the recent New York Film Festival where *Passion* was shown, Godard was asked to comment on someone's statement that his latter-day films had become his "thinking out loud." Godard, takingly gentle, replied, "Perhaps they are thinking in silence." This seems more than a fast answer. His recent films can be seen as attempts to make interiority visible and audible, in ways that try the borders of cinematic acceptance.

Passion is released here in connection with Zoetrope Studios; the American print bears the title "Francis Ford Coppola Presents." Coppola also presents a new film of his own, called *Rumble Fish*. That logo at the start is the only relation to Godard: comparison of the two films would be senseless. Comparison of *Rumble Fish* with Coppola's own past films is sad enough.

Admiration could wax or wane for Coppola's work through *Apocalypse Now*, but at least it was always in the offing. His gigantic misconception-misconstruction about Vietnam seems to have drained him. Money troubles are part of it, of course, and not to be blithely discounted: film columns are full of Coppola's money problems. But the trouble isn't that his subsequent films are on a smaller financial scale; it's that they are rhetorical, not imaginative. *One from the Heart* was a completely synthetic film by a once-committed director: Coppola's own disbelief in the enterprise flooded the screen and dripped all over the audience. I haven't seen the subsequent film called *The Outsiders*. *Rumble Fish*, made from a novel by that S. E. Hinton who wrote *Tex*, is such whooped-up banality that I hope it's an act of myopia on Coppola's part, not of knowing cynicism.

This is one more James Dean picture, this time in Tulsa. A rebellious, inarticulate adolescent, played by Matt Dillon of *Tex*, has trouble at high school and trouble with his girl. She, played by Diane Lane, runs true to the form of these stories: she is pretty, intelligent, well-bred, and either sees the poet in this grungy brute or is attracted by his brutishness: in any case she loves him. To this usual mix is added a usual legendary figure, the boy's older brother,

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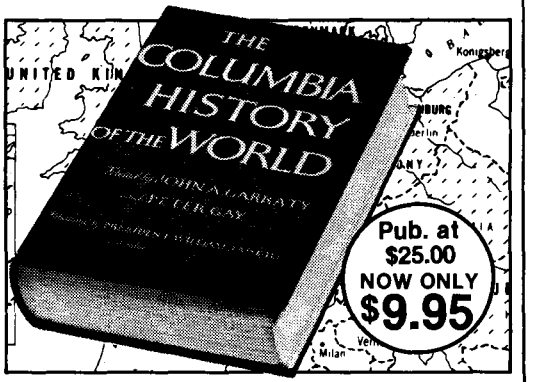

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played by Mickey Rourke, as laconically wise as he was in *Diner*. Here he rides a motorcycle instead of horses, thus combining the motor mystique of *American Graffiti* with the cycle mystique of *Nashville*. He of course is poetically doomed, though why any god or fate would bother to doom him is hard to understand; and after the doom is fulfilled, Dillon carries on his brother's dream, which apparently consists chiefly of going to California and doing nothing there instead of doing nothing in Tulsa.

It's all a ridiculously trite configuration of adolescent heroics, and to make it worse, Coppola tricks it up with arty trimmings: scudding clouds; portentous music (Stewart Copeland's score contains more drum-banging than I've heard in a film score since Leonard Bernstein's drums in *On the Waterfront*); Wellesian black-and-white photography, except for two fighting fish in a pet-shop tank which are shown in color. One of Rourke's ambitions is to set those fish free in the river so that they won't fight in confinement. He gives his life in the effort, after freeing many other beasties and birdies in the pet shop. Dillon completes the liberation of the fish for his dead brother.

I suppose there's a moral in all this, but it's not about those poor fish, it's about Coppola.

ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

The Paradox of Actors

The actor has always been one of the most marginal and yet one of the most central members of society. Out of the ranks of those identified with vagrants and gypsies, pariahs once refused burial in sacred ground, can arise a figure who for a time becomes the icon of the age, the glass of fashion, the mirror of

Edmund Kean
by Raymund Fitzsimons

conduct and style. That such a reviled profession can also yield such instant fame and influence (and presently even political power) partly explains its continuing attraction for so many aspirants, and the hypnotic fascination it holds for the media. The lives, careers, affairs, marriages, divorces, alcohol and drug problems, and personal quirks of stage and movie personalities virtually dominate the entertainment and feature sections of our newspapers and magazines, while reviewers and reporters seem under some weekly editorial compulsion to identify new idols for a fickle, star-dazzled public.

The intimate nature of these stories, and their celebratory tone, sometimes suggest that the relationship between the actor and the public is a pact between the exhibitionist and the voyeur. Acting at its most ideal is a joint activity in which the performer merges his personality with the group and his personal qualities with the role, in each case reinforcing the collective experience through the force of the individual imagination. The media and the public, on the other hand, are ever eager to pluck the plum from the pudding. They glorify the actor who stands apart from the group, encouraging him to emphasize his own personal idiosyncrasies, since the value of a star performer, like that of all commercial products in the market, is measured by a recognition factor. Thus, although self-subordination is an essential element of the histrionic art, our celebrity culture is always beckoning the actor toward a form of self-exposure.

This is one of the paradoxes suggested by *Edmund Kean*, a play by Raymund Fitzsimons currently on view at the Brooks Atkinson Theatre. A one-man show about a notoriously flamboyant nineteenth-century English star, it is being performed entirely by a singularly modest and unassuming twentieth-century English actor, Ben Kingsley, who in the process absorbs some of the vanity and egocentricity of the character he is impersonating. The ironies implicit in this are boundless, but they are ironies that sometimes seem a lot more interesting than the play.

Edmund Kean, after an obscure career in the provinces, was much admired in London, particularly by Coleridge, who described his acting with that lovely, tantalizing phrase: "To see Kean was to read Shakespeare by flashes of lightning." No less awed by Kean, William Hazlitt was a little more circumspect, writing of his "fiery soul and pygmy body," and adding that he was "possessed with a fury, a demon that leaves him no repose, no time for thought or room for imagination." A dwarfish actor without access to mind or imagination would not seem ideally equipped for greatness, and in addition to his diminutive frame, Kean had a harsh, croaking vocal instrument ("I know of no more irksome noises," noted a contemporary critic, "than those which issue from his breast,") that limited him to roles marked by frenzy or malignity. One is reminded of George C. Scott.

But Kean dazzled his contemporaries with acting said to be totally free from artificiality. Coming on the heels of the sedate Kemble, whose every gesture looked as if he were modeling for some classical piece of statuary, Kean seemed to be ushering in a new age of histrionic naturalness. A generation earlier, David Garrick was also praised for naturalness; so, in fact, was virtually every celebrated actor in history, including our own Marlon Brando, Al Pacino, and Robert De Niro. It is one of the sad ironies of the acting profession that what seems radically true to one age always seems stylized and artificial to the next.

PART OF Kean's appeal, though it shocked some upper-class contemporaries, was his scandalous personal life. The issue of "a part-time whore and a drunken Irishman," he was always sensitive about his lowly birth, and falsely claimed a noble lineage. Successful mainly in villain roles, Kean was privately ruthless and unethical. He broke contract after contract to advance his career, and when he finally became the leading tragedian of Drury Lane, he displayed the selfish ego of the small-minded star, refusing to allow any other actor to move in front of him on stage, and monopolizing all the leading roles. He was relentlessly unfaithful to his long-suffering wife, both with grand ladies and with whores; he was riddled with clap; and he was a dedicated alcoholic, frequently staggering onto the stage and performing in a state bordering on narcosis.

How does one make a play out of this *National Enquirer* material? Not very eas-

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ily. Jean-Paul Sartre tried his hand at one, based on a romantic drama by Dumas, but it came out full of bombast and rodomontade, erotic intrigue, and bloated existential musings on the fate of the actor. Fitzsimons's effort is more modest, if more tiresome, a historically correct tintype, which functions primarily as a showcase for Ben Kingsley. Holding the stage with a two-hour semidramatized biography, interspersed with Shakespearean soliloquies, and broken only by a short intermission, Kingsley elicits the same admiration as a marathon runner, for endurance rather than for style. I hasten to add that few actors could hold my attention with a 120-minute monologue; but then how many actors would want to?

THE OPEN STAGE on which this monologue takes place contains a few theatrical artifacts—a trunk, a mannequin, a dressing table, and draped curtains—and the passage of time is marked by tinny Elizabethan music. Wearing a leonine wig and a black moustache, Kingsley swings from storytelling to soliloquy, leaping into position to play Harlequin or Shylock, as the lights change to underline the transitions. The author makes some small effort, not much, to create parallels between Kean's life and the Shakespeare roles he is playing, but more often the play is only a clothesline on which are hung the wet garments of a self-infatuated life. Unlike Kean's, Kingsley's vocal instrument is light and flexible; it can also be fervent when the occasion warrants. But although Kingsley could conceivably play well some of the roles from which he reads extracts (particularly Othello), he provides nothing to indicate why Kean was considered such an electrifying performer in his day. What, then, is the purpose of this evening? One comes away not only persuaded of Kean's narcissism, but suspecting that the humble, unassuming actor impersonating him may have absorbed a little of it himself.

There is one moment, and one moment only, when the shards of this evening begin to coalesce into a potentially significant theme. Kean has just discovered that his aristocratic mistress has been unfaithful to him with her husband's clerk. Kean's wife has discovered the affair, and so has the cuckolded husband. A new audience favorite, Macready, is stepping on his heels, and

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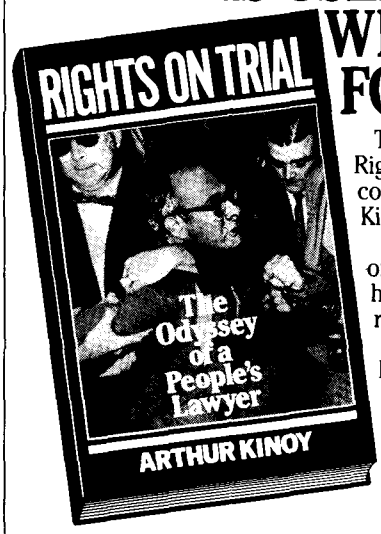

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threatening to displace him. An outraged mob has come to bait him in the theater. For the first time in his life, Kean is forced to defend himself on stage. His performance brings no applause, only jeers ("a living death"). Sodden with drink, Kean is reviled as an alcoholic, which for a moment turns him reflective: "They made me drunk with applause and now they want me to be sober."

This thematic germ—the intoxication of the actor by the praise of the audience, the corruption of art by celebrity—could well have been the foundation for an interesting play, since it is to my mind among the most poignant truths in the contemporary theater, one that is daily enacted in dramas of failed and unfulfilled careers. But the moment passes all too quickly before we are back in the tabloid saga of Kean's later years and death, when he collapses on stage while playing Othello, and tells his son: "I am dying—speak to them for me." Too much has been spoken, however, about the actor's squalid life, and too little understood about his battered profession, to make this evening much more than a form of theatrical voyeurism, a peek into the seamier side of an artist's world.

HOPE AGAINST HOPE

The Tarnished Door
by John Crewdson

(Times Books, 354 pp., $17.95)

Some pass at night into this country on foot. Some pass hidden beneath canvas in trucks, some hug inner tubes on water, or swim, or crawl through cut wire fences, or they arrive at our airports with smiling faces and visas and credit cards, as students or tourists, and never go home.

To speak of them at all is to speak of numbers: a Princeton demographer supposes that there are 4 million illegal aliens in this country. State Department statisticians say that the figure is 7 million. *The Washington Post* reports that there are 250,000-500,000 people illegally entering the country each year. Maxwell Taylor, retired chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, believes that the number is much higher, a million. . . .

In *The Tarnished Door*, John Crewdson warns against the possibility of our ever knowing exactly, even against the propriety of a guess. (Xenophobia feeds on the unprovable total; people begin to imagine a human figure in the nighttime shape of a cactus.) And yet, in order to write this book, Crewdson himself must cast into the dark: "For whatever they are worth . . . most guesses by what are commonly referred to as responsible observers suggest that there were between 1 million and 3 million illegal aliens living in the United States in 1975 and that there have been half a million new arrivals each year since then." So, 4 to 6 million, or around 3 percent of the nation's total population.

John Crewdson, national editor of *The Chicago Tribune*, won a Pulitzer Prize for his articles on immigration. Though it does not pretend to be either exhaustive or scholarly, *The Tarnished Door* is, by virtue of its scope, a good introduction to a great American dilemma. Crewdson's prose is clear and his tone deliberately calm in proportion as the information he imparts is alarming.

To begin with, Crewdson would have us see the issue of illegal immigration in numerical perspective; every year there are more legal immigrants and refugees (three-quarters of a million) gaining citizenship than there are illegal immigrants entering the country. Of those illegally here, Crewdson would urge sympathy for the very poor, who come to this country to do our menial work and take very low wages. Crewdson distinguishes them from other illegal immigrants—foreigners with visas (mostly students) who overstay their allowed time and end up taking high-paying jobs. These middle-class illegal immigrants are probably as numerous as the poor border crossers, according to Crewdson, and yet most of the government's attention has been focused on the poor. In a single month of 1981, in El Paso, the Border Patrol arrested people from thirty different countries—among them Italy, South Africa, New Zealand, Jordan. The most profluent "sending countries," however, are Latin American, and foremost among these is Mexico. Mexico accounts for (a guess) six out of ten of this country's illegal aliens.

NOTWITHSTANDING Mexico's long betrayal of her poor, Mexican government officials perfunctorily reject such figures as gringo hyperbole. But there are reasons for the great migration north. Nearly half of Mexico's population is unemployed or underemployed. The illiteracy rate is 60 percent. One out of six citizens of Mexico does not have drinkable water. Each year, one hundred thousand of Mexico's children die before they reach adolescence. And, in the midst of suffering, there is luxuriant hunger for life. The Mexican poor are infected by what may turn out to be a fatal desire for the embrace of the child. (Since the mid-1940s, the population has tripled.)

So they come. Most come, Crewdson believes, for temporary work; they are commuters from the third world. Many return each summer to Mexico, come back to *los Estados Unidos* in the fall. They come to harvest our crops, to clean our houses, to watch over our children and our aged, to fill our plates or to scrape them.

When they arrive, they expect two Americas and they find two. As workers and consumers, they are welcomed and used. But as outlaws ("illegals"), they are methodically hunted. Mexicans are accustomed to the double standard. There are two ways in Mexico. There is the realm of the public, the official—the listed price or the written law. In fact, however, official means negotiable, capable of being subverted by private dealings—bartering in the market place, a bribe in the jail.

In the United States, Mexicans have come to take official prohibitions as just that: official—an inconvenience to their lives in private America. The man in the body shop was arrested and deported yesterday, but he shows up for work this morning. He hurried to get back, he tells Crewdson, because he was in the middle of a job. If he gets arrested today, he will be back tomorrow, or soon. The determination registers not so much defiance of the law as a pa-

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tience with it, tempered with certainty that the law does not describe the way life actually is.

Crewdson's most telling chapters are about those people who have the task of wearing America's official face. "The Immigration and Naturalization Service is a shambles, an agency out of control," former Representative Elizabeth Holtzman has said. Crewdson discloses a nineteenth-century agency (the very model of a Dickensian Circumlocution Office) where mail bags accumulate and telephones ring unanswered and I.N.S. employees, "some of whom are semiliterate," must interpret thousands of pages of regulations governing immigration status, emigration, and naturalization. Files get lost—cases are kept "pending." The I.N.S. is responsible for maintaining records on all aliens, but when President Carter phones to find out how many Iranian students are in the country, he can't be told. (No records exist.) Where bureaucracies fail, corruption flourishes. Bribes cut a short route through the file room. Even where there is no discernible corruption, there are people who have given up. An occupant of job classification GS-3 paints her nails red.

Crewdson's report is most severe concerning that division of the I.N.S. designated the Border Patrol. "If the F.B.I., highly trained and well paid, was at the top of the federal law enforcement ladder, then the Border Patrol, which was neither, was near the bottom. . . . " The simple cartographic scope of the job (six thousand miles of border to guard with only four hundred men on duty at a time) describes frustration. Among the patrolmen are some of pitiless temperament, men for whom the patrol is blood sport. Mexicans ("tonks") have been beaten, raped, shot at, killed by the Border Patrol. For decent patrolmen there is dulling frustration at corruption and cruelty, and at a job that never gets done. The same people are arrested, deported, arrested.

THE BORDER separating possibility from certain want is destined to be trampled by the desperate. And how shall the desperate be turned back? Recent newspaper accounts describe a Mexico grown fearful of a treading on her southern skirts—travelers from an even more desperate south. Mexico reels; she imposes restrictions against the future. The future? Crewdson may be right to claim that half of today's illegal immigrants in America are middle-class visa violators. But in twenty-six years the population of Latin America will double. And, by the middle of the twenty-first century, nine out of ten persons in the world will be born in countries of poverty. By virtue of numbers, the future belongs to the poor.

For now, Crewdson believes, America is getting the better part of the unofficial arrangement: "Nothing I had seen had convinced me that [the millions of illegal aliens] who walk or swim across the border . . . were harming America." The points of this appraisal ring familiar enough: aliens pay into the Social Security system and take little away. The alien usually isn't employed at one job long enough to earn seniority, so high-paying jobs get saved for Americans. Even though he must try to send a good portion of his earnings home to relatives, the alien usually spends about half his income in this country on room and board. Then there is the farmer—in this case he is a Texas grower—who testifies that without cheap immigrant labor, a head of lettuce would cost $5.

IF CREWDSON's points prove that Americans are getting the best of the deal, they prove also (ironically) that illegal aliens are being shortchanged. When the Texas grower offers his line about the $5 head of lettuce, Crewdson accepts the figure without question. His doing so is not simply journalistic failure, for he is unwittingly led to defend a system of exploitation. The American grower and the American consumer both save money on the backs of aliens. If the head of lettuce ends up costing $5, instead of fifty cents, the point is not decimal, it is moral.

In passing, Crewdson notes that illegal aliens are of concern to American labor unions. But Crewdson's regard of the alien remains resolutely blear: "Look for a job that is physically demanding, or dangerous, demeaning or boring, which offers little security or advancement opportunity and pays badly to boot, and the chances are that it is being done by someone without permission to live and work in the country." But the point made by the men and the women who organized coal miners, construction trade workers, garment workers, and, more recently, farm workers, has long been that demeaning or boring or dangerous work

"It was a little like learning to ride a bicycle."

One day I suddenly seemed to get the hang of it, and then I wondered why it had taken me so long."

Jack Greenstein is talking here, in his book WHAT THE CHILDREN TAUGHT ME, about learning to control a class. Mr. Greenstein learned all kinds of things in his twenty-three years in Chicago public schools—thirteen as a teacher, ten as a principal. He learned to cope with recalcitrant students, irate parents, and inefficient teachers; with bureaucratic snags, large menacing boys with knives, racial tensions. He also learned how to preserve his sense of humor, his humanity, and his affection for children.

His book is a beguiling memoir, full of delightful stories of the children he taught—and who taught him. More than this, it is full of good advice for educators or any who care about the quality of education. A superbly amiable man, Greenstein is also a man with strong—and well-earned—opinions about such issues as integration, vocational education, and reading scores.

Schools of education might do well to make this book a standard text. Where else can young teachers find so much sensible advice, such as: "Do listen to the children....And, who knows? If we listen to them, they might even listen to us."

What the Children Taught Me

JACK GREENSTEIN

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should at least be well paid. What labor organizers fear is that employers will hire the desperate foreigner to avoid improving wages and working conditions for the American worker.

Though Crewdson insists that the illegal immigrant usually takes work no one else wants, I doubt that the situation can be perceived with so much resignation in the black ghetto. (Crewdson reports that "I.N.S. officials in Los Angeles say that most of the tips they receive about where illegal aliens are living and working come from blacks.") In some sections of Los Angeles, growing Hispanic neighborhoods are forcing the borders of the barrio into black neighborhoods, driving up rents. In other cities—I think of Miami—blacks have lost political ground. In the 1960s, the black civil rights movement forced white Miami to acknowledge the claims of blacks to a share of political power. But before blacks could advance, Miami turned Hispanic. The American black was essentially forgotten in Miami's civic transactions—numbers made accommodation to Hispanics seem the more urgent business.

There is a temptation, I think, to use the illegal alien as a foil against lower-class Americans. In public and in private I hear a brand of praise of the illegal alien couched in terms insinuating criticism of "those people on welfare." The illegal alien has become the good peasant, a figure of example. Crewdson quotes Leonel Castillo, the head of the I.N.S. under President Carter: "All the businessmen I talk to, they say, 'Send us more,' not more whites, blacks, or even native-born chicanos, but more immigrants."

In Mexico, Crewdson observes, life reduces to "the simplest of equations: work or starve." Work becomes life. The feel of work, the assurance of a handle to hold, a hope. The apple is torn from the branch; the knife slits open the fish; the stake is plunged to the earth (faster . . . faster). Work or starve. They work.

"God, do they work," a man tells several others over martinis at the Bel-Air Hotel. "I've never seen people work like those Mexicans." And in Santa Barbara—as he watches some Mexicans dig up his garden—another man remembers his ancestors from Scotland. "They worked the same way. Same good, honest, peasant virtues. Never afraid of dirty hands." Such praise confuses the valor of a man struggling with the struggle itself. There is virtue in the former, not in the latter.

CROSSING the border into southwestern America, the Mexican need not suffer the same sense of dislocation many other immigrants feel. In the Southwest, the sky and the land are continuous, palpable extensions of what the Mexican leaves behind, as are the Spanish place names that welcome him to American cities that were Mexican once. In the barrio of the American city it is possible to speak only Spanish. It is used in stores, on billboards, voting ballots, and television stations, by politicians (Hispanic and not), lawyers, and churches—and even in classrooms.

Toward the end of his book, Crewdson notes the reluctance of many new immigrants to follow the traditional route toward Americanization, but as ever Crewdson's impulse is to reassure. He offers, for example, as gentle an assessment of bilingual education ("surely the nation's least understood social program") as I have read. What Crewdson does not say is that bilingual education was proposed in the 1970s by Americans who began to discount the importance of assimilation ("the melting pot"), preferring to believe a rightful purpose of public schooling was to foster "cultural diversity" and ethnic pride. Crewdson would have us accept that "the main goal of every bilingual education program is to develop fluency in English." Even if bilingual education were that straightforward in its intention, one should question the effect of keeping children in foreign language classrooms—not weeks or even months but year after year. We risk trapping children in a linguistic ghetto, feeling themselves alien during the crucial early years of schooling.

Crewdson does not say it but the cohesion of the Hispanic "community"—so diverse otherwise in racial background and history and economic

THE RUSTLE OF HISTORY'S WINGS, AS THEY SAID THEN

Not far from the railway track beside the painful post office
I saw a ceramic plaque on an old house, and I knew
That this was the name of the son of someone whose girl I took
Years ago: she left him and came to me
And the young man was born to another woman
And didn't know about all this.

Those were days of great love and great destiny,
The colonial power imposed a curfew on the city and confined us
To sweet love in a room
Guarded by well-armed soldiers.

I paid five shillings and changed my ancestral name
From the diaspora to a proud Hebrew name to match hers.

That whore fled to America, married someone,
A spice broker, pepper, cinnamon and cardamon,
And left me with my new name and the war.

"The rustle of history's wings" as they said then,
Which almost killed me in battle,
Blew softly over her face.

And with the terrible wisdom of war they told me to carry
My first-aid bandage right over my heart
Over the foolish heart that still loved her
And over the wise heart that would forget.

YEHUDA AMICHAI

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class—depends upon language. There are political futures that count on Spanish. There are business executives who profit from Spanish (by Crewdson's account, these are Spanish-language television and advertising executives who hope "to cultivate the rich and largely untapped Spanish-speaking market").

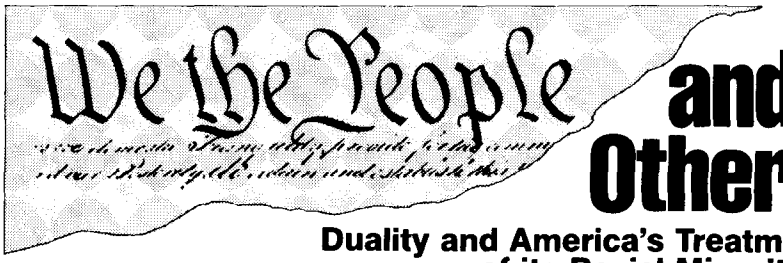
President Reagan has seen the same statistics that circulate through the nation's advertising agencies. Hispanics are the fastest-growing, youngest (for Crewdson "the most fertile"), and becoming the largest minority in America. (Recently Coors Beer directed its ministers of culture to publish the proclamation on billboards in barrios: COORS BEER SALUTES THE DECADE OF THE HISPANIC). Hispanics may, indeed, gain quick political notice as a group, but political power will come only to those individuals who see themselves as more American than Hispanic.

When Crewdson considers the impact of the illegal immigrant on America's social and cultural life, he sounds like a chamberlain of commerce: ". . . in many cases the new immigrants were making our cities livelier, more diverse, more complex, and interesting; they were rejuvenating decaying downtown areas and adding bright cosmopolitan touches to suburbs that had assumed a depressing fast-food and shopping mall homogeneity." Something important *is* happening to this country, something insoluble which will not be sweetened to status quo with quick-dissolving words like "diversity" or neutralized to a Sunday-supplement notion of cosmopolitanism that amounts to little more than Tex-Mex cuisine or a new wave of décor favoring cactus over fern. Millions of foreign lives—lives entire, born of centuries—are coming. America stands to be re-created.

I THINK of the America my father discovered. The America that surprised him, surprises him still, is a country of optimism. He can't get over the fact that when a street light burns out at the corner, someone will come in a couple of days to replace it. Americans are always ready to fix things, he says. Precisely—there is in America an optimism derived from an early Protestant faith in a new man. Anything wrong can be fixed.

By contrast, what my father inherited from my grandfather, what he shares with many Mexicans, is a tragic sensi-

clearly demonstrates the extent to which racism is embedded in the nation's history...



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1953–IKE order reaffirms FBI's responsibility to ferret out employee disloyalty and makes it mandatory that any accused person be immediately dismissed and reinstated only at the discretion of the agency head. (see July 2)

1961–JFK tells the American Newspapers Publishers Association before publishing to ask not only "is it news?" but also "is it in the interest of national security?"

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bility. Traditional to the Mexican is the knowledge that not everything can be repaired, that there are limits to possibility. Throughout *The Tarnished Door*, Crewdson remarks on the "fatalism" of Mexican aliens. There is an extraordinary patience with life's hardness, a calm near to stoic. It is, in part, a medieval Spanish mood, rooted in Catholicism and the notion of Original Sin. But it is also an attitude consonant with ancient Indian ceremonies of death. Fatal patience has been nurtured too by a harsh colonial and post-colonial history—generation after generation rooted in poverty.

CREWDSON DISCERNS the Mexican habit of endurance in the patience with which illegal aliens meet the sardonic face of America: "Negotiating such hazards [employers who end up not paying, I.N.S. raids, crooked landlords and immigration lawyers] is the price they pay for being in America, and they accept their lot with a certain fatalism. 'Nothing happens before its time' is what they say."

Octavio Paz has written that Mexico and the United States "are neighbors, condemned to live alongside each other; they are separated, however, more by profound social, economic, and psychic differences than by physical and political frontiers." When Mexicans cross the border, they pass into a new territory of the soul. A Mexican woman in Los Angeles tells me she isn't sure she wants to raise her two children in this country, for it is too materialistic. And yet, she says, "This country has been so good to us. There is hope here." In another room, her husband, a tailor, is sewing and he sings folk songs in a clear tenor voice. "In Mexico," his wife tells me, "because there is no work, people grow tired." (The trivial tourist to a Mexican village sees only drowsy men sitting under a tree.) "Here it is different, here is work, so we can work." She smiles. It is clear she will not go back; she has breathed already the keen optimism of her new country.

Those liberals who worry aloud that we Americanize immigrant children too much, those who disdain the word "assimilation" do not understand the way assimilation works. It is reciprocal. As the immigrant is changed—often radically so and quickly, in time more subtly—the immigrant as surely changes the culture he enters. The Mexican comes to this country as the messenger of a new tragic knowledge. What he knows is that some things are never repaired. This is what he will teach the American—as optimism washes over and receives the rock of tragic sensibility.

THROUGH THE 1970s, many Americans withheld intolerance of illegal aliens because there was profit in cheap labor. But, Crewdson notes, with the arrival of the Marielito Cubans (unyielding faces amidst grateful smiles of refugees) and with persistent high American unemployment, the national mood began to change in 1980 and so, appropriately, did the intent of Congress. America sought to resume control of illegal immigration. The bill that has received the most attention in Congress is one introduced by Senator Alan Simpson and Representative Romano Mazzoli. Their bill would grant citizenship to the majority of illegal aliens now in the country, and at the same time hold employers culpable in future for hiring illegal aliens.

Crewdson is sympathetic to the aims of such legislation, but skeptical: "Nearly every aspect of the Simpson-Mazzoli bill . . . called for more of the very things—more regulation, more laws, more enforcement, more bureaucracies, more computers, more hardware, and more money—that, as should have been clear by now to the White House and Congress, were incapable of significantly reducing illegal immigration." Were Simpson-Mazzoli ever to pass, Crewdson thinks the I.N.S. would break under the bureaucratic strain of having to determine which persons (among millions) are entitled to citizenship; which employers (among millions) are hiring illegal aliens.

Simpson-Mazzoli remains pending—not because its aims are judged unworkable by members of Congress, but for simple reasons of politics. Once again the mood in Washington has shifted; initial resolve has turned soft, uncertain, regarding immigration reforms. Republicans and Democrats alike are beginning to reckon with the decade of the Hispanic. And while Hispanic-American opinions on illegal immigration are probably diverse, those persons Washington chooses to consider "Hispanic spokesmen" are nearly united in their opposition to Simpson-Mazzoli. (The fear they voice is that employers will stop hiring Hispanic-Americans so as to avoid accidentally hiring the illegal alien. It is, in any case, the Hispanic-American who would end up having to prove his citizenship.) The politician listens because it is Hispanic numbers that matter. Attorney General Smith confides to the press that the President will probably veto sections of the bill; House Speaker O'Neill announces he will not submit Simpson-Mazzoli for a vote without the support of the Hispanic congressional caucus.

The value of a bill like Simpson-Mazzoli is not so much that it would solve the problem as that it would identify it. The last and first and hardest solution to the problem of illegal immigration is beyond the power of an immigration reform bill to enforce. Until the world is balanced, until distinctions between rich country and poor, developed country and third world are ameliorated, illegal immigration will continue. There are too many people who are trying to come, no way to stop them all. When Crewdson completed *The Tarnished Door* a few months ago, he could write that there were close to 1 million arrests of illegal aliens in a single year. This year the I.N.S. expects the total to grow to 1.5 million. The border cannot hold.

IT DOES NOT follow, however, that we should abandon all efforts to control the movement across the border. Congress does have responsibilities that neither political opportunism nor fatalism should obscure. Congress has, for example, responsibility for making the I.N.S. work better than it does. And while no one can expect the Border Patrol to prevent all illegal immigration, we have a right to expect a less corrupt police force. It is not impossible either to imagine further legislative remedies like temporary worker programs which would allow foreign workers into the country to fill jobs Americans truly don't want, at the same time protecting alien workers from mistreatment.

It is xenophobia Crewdson fears most (the political demagogue, the unemployed crowd). But as deep as xenophobia in the American soul is another fear: the fear of having to turn the immigrant back. The best part of us glories to see the immigrant cross our border to hope, for his coming reaffirms us. We are hope. If the day were ever to come when we had to efface words of welcome from the Statue of Liberty our faith in ourselves would die.

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The illegal alien arrives at a time when Americans clearly perceive resources—land, water, money, jobs—to be finite. To admit finitude is not simply to echo some nineteenth-century nativist sentiment, it is rather to acknowledge that there are more people in the world who would come to America than America can admit. To know this does not make it any easier to watch the illegal alien being arrested. We are made guilty by the sight. We sense an unravelling of the American dream—the best part of us lost.

The overwhelming temptation is to turn away. Let the Border Patrol deal with them. But there is a knock at our door. The Mexican maid at the hotel would like to change the sheets now. ("Please. . .") This is a story without a solution.

RICHARD RODRIGUEZ

Richard Rodriguez is the author of *Hunger of Memory* (Godine).

RED HARVEST

Dashiell Hammett: A Life by Diane Johnson

(Random House, 344 pp., $17.95)

There were three Dashiell Hammetts, not one. There was the writer who perfected a new kind of detective story, featuring a tough, amoral sleuth—the nameless Continental Op, Sam Spade of *The Maltese Falcon*, Nick Charles of *The Thin Man*. Though Hammett brought distinctive experience and imagination to this form of fictional entertainment, it is a minor literary genre, which other writers such as Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald enriched and deepened; Hammett's work, broken off abruptly, seems a frail literary reason for a biography.

There was also Dashiell Hammett the Communist, who in 1951, as one of the trustees of a bail-bond fund for indicted Communist leaders, went to jail rather than reveal the names of the contributors to the fund. (Many people would now prefer the word "leftist," but Communist is what they were; in Hammett's case we can call a spade a spade.) His silence was regarded as heroic, and the Communist Party publicity machine turned him into a martyr of the Cold War persecuted for his beliefs, though he was in fact being questioned because four of the defendants, including Gus Hall, the C. P. leader, had jumped bail and were fugitives.

Finally there is Dashiell Hammett, the tragic figure of Lillian Hellman's memoirs, the ravaged *poète maudit* (as played by Jason Robards) in *An Unfinished Woman*, *Scoundrel Time*, and *Pentimento*. For her he is a hero of our time. In the short introduction to *The Big Knockover*, a collection of Hammett's stories published in 1966, Hellman wrote a moving account of Hammett's life and her life with him, a relationship that endured, off and on, for thirty years. Her tribute is totally unsentimental, gracefully written, beautifully felt; as a testament of love for a difficult, charming, and tortured man, this brief remembrance is a perfect model of its kind. Hellman reprinted this introduction at the end of *An Unfinished Woman*, and one would have assumed there was no more that needed to be said.

In recent years, however, Hellman became caught up in the wars of historical interpretation. She was determined to rewrite the history of the left-liberal intelligentsia of America, to establish her version of the 1950s as the dominant one for future historians. This is the reason for Hellman's celebrated feuds with Diana Trilling and Mary McCarthy, her attempts to minimize her willingness to apologize for Stalinism long beyond the point of ignorance or forgiveness, and her need to affirm McCarthyism as the central fact of left-wing intellectual experience in the 1950s. Though Hellman had already presented her version of that period in *Scoundrel Time*, a full-scale biography of Dashiell Hammett, despite the fact that there have been two others, becomes a natural counterpart. To this end, Hell-

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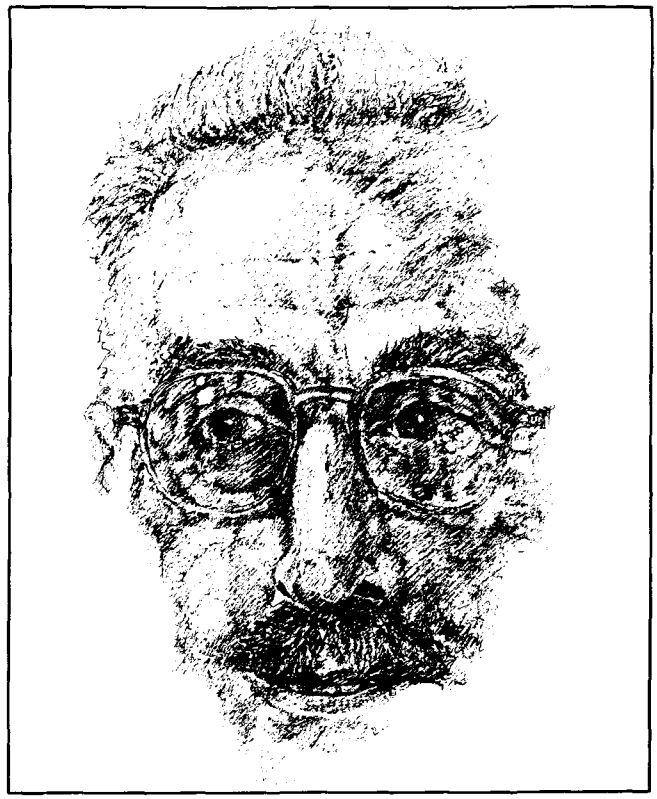
man authorized Diane Johnson to write it.

It would be hard to think of a biography more thoroughly held captive by the authorizing strings than the one Johnson has produced. Hellman's unwavering vigilance casts its shadow on every page. Though Johnson has made abundant use of letters, documents, and personal memories that Hellman did not share with the earlier biographers of Hammett, she has made no effort to find her own point of view, to understand Hammett's life and radicalism with an independent eye and mind. Because she is a political naïf, and lacks the qualifications of an historian or a political analyst which are essential for the study of this life, she has swallowed Lillian Hellman's version of the man and his politics hook, Party-line, and sinker. Such self-effacement is not what one might have expected from Johnson, the author of *The Shadow Knows*, a powerful novel; many intelligent and unorthodox essays and reviews, recently collected in *Terrorists and Novelists*; and an oddly poignant biography, *Lesser Lives*, about the first wife of George Meredith. Because Diane Johnson has undertaken this project against the grain of her own lively intelligence, she has written a bad book.

That she is in over her head is evident from the start in the flaccid prose, the irresolute jumbling of detail, the pointless shifts in tone. For an intelligent critic she is remarkably apathetic about the biographer's crucial task of analyzing and evaluating the work which gave Hammett his high literary reputation. Beyond a few uninspired generalizations in her introductory remarks, she has almost nothing to say about the writer who wrenched detective fiction out of its genteel Holmesian sockets and, drawing upon his own experience as an operative for the Pinkerton Agency, created a unique kind of detective—so hard-boiled, as Dorothy Parker put it, you could roll him on the White House lawn. Instead of the conventional, elegantly detached intellectual sleuth with uncanny powers of deduction, Hammett's Continental Op was a man of brutal action, "a little man," as Hammett described him, "going forth day after day through mud and blood and death and deceit—as callous and brutal and cynical as necessary—towards a dim goal with nothing to push or pull him [to] it except that he had been hired to reach it."

The world of the Continental Op, in the stories and the two novels (*Red Harvest* and *The Dain Curse*) he narrates with blunt, hard precision, is a corrupt abattoir, a world of lies, fraudulence, treachery, and violence. By the time



DASHIELL HAMMETT BY DAVID SCHORR FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Hammett wrote *The Maltese Falcon*, his private eye had become more romantically personable and sexy than the short and dumpy Op, but Sam Spade was no less unscrupulous, willing to connive simultaneously with crooks and cops, to betray the women who foolishly trust him, to use ruthless and illegal means for achieving ends that, in his code, are construed as honorable, such as avenging the murder of his partner. In a cynical and vicious world, Hammett's detectives could be as cynical and vicious as the rest of them. So seductive was Hammett's portrayal that this hard-boiled detective soon found his place among the fantasies that feed American popular culture. The novels and the movies they became (often scrubbed clean beyond recognition) brought Hammett blazing success, both financial and critical. He had caught to perfection the high-riding, crime-ridden American world of the 1920s, and the rewards were immense.

Yet in the early 1930s, after he published his fifth and last novel, *The Thin Man*—his least characteristic book, one drawn from a public café-society persona that was alien to his own dark nature—his career as a writer came to an end, thirty years before his death in 1961. Johnson has all the facts about the demons that assaulted him, but she seems so timid about interpreting and judging what she records that we end the book with little more understanding of Hammett's tortured personality than we began. Much of the time he seemed to be fighting a war against himself, and the anguish exacted its price in the pathological drinking, the sordid womanizing, the reckless and joyless squandering of the huge sums he earned in his heyday. His friend Nunnally Johnson believed that "his behavior could be accounted for only by an assumption that he had no expectation of being alive much beyond Thursday," and this was no idle fatalism, since he suffered throughout his adult life from serious diseases of the lungs.

Diane Johnson tells us at one point that Hammett had "a strange and sweet nature," but this is not often borne out by the facts she so listlessly sets down. His life was, in any case, a web of puzzling contradictions that Johnson makes no effort to clarify. A Southern Catholic from a poor rural family, he became a smart-talking, hard-drinking dandy in Hollywood and New York. A grade-school dropout, he was a formidably knowledgeable autodidact. A Communist who reviled American capitalism, he went to extraordinary lengths to be accepted by the Army during World War II despite his age—48—and his medical history. The years of heedless self-destruction did their damage, but about the nagging problem of why the words dried up, Johnson has little to say.

It is clear that he had become sick of

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the tough-detective mystery by the time he published *The Thin Man*, and knew he could do no more with it. He had come to feel, as he said, that "this hard-boiled stuff is a menace," and he now longed to write fiction that had more substance and a chance of permanence. It is easy to see, reading the five novels today, why he had grown tired of the form and its formulas. With brilliant skill he had hammered out a hard and biting style, devoid of rhetorical indulgence and descriptive flab; dialogue, unadorned and exact, was his great strength. With the possible exception of *The Maltese Falcon*, however, the people in his convoluted narratives are without much human depth: their characters are determined by the plot, while in serious fiction it is the other way around—the story is a natural and fated extension of character. It may be that *The Maltese Falcon* appears to stand outside this judgment only because Humphrey Bogart, Peter Lorre, and Sydney Greenstreet have made Hammett's words flesh so unforgettably. (Two earlier movies were based on the novel, and bowdlerized it; one, called *Satan Met a Lady*, starred Bette Davis, who said it was the worst clinker she ever acted in. Only John Huston's version, its dialogue taken directly from the book, became a classic.) For all the blood and evil that pour off the page, the other novels do not stick in the mind.

For some thirty years Hammett struggled to write another novel—only the weak, autobiographical fragment, "Tulip," remains from those futile efforts—but everything got in the way: booze, politics, war, and a writer's block that grew bigger all the time. Yet, faced with a wealth of anomaly and paradox that ought to make a biographer wonder and think, the best Johnson can do in summing up Hammett's character is a dubious paradox of her own: "The heroism of his life lay not in his Horatio Alger success, rather it lay in the long years after success, when money and gifts were gone. It is the long blank years that prove the spirit."

POLITICALLY, of course, those years were not blank. What Johnson is referring to in this high-minded but fuzzy accolade is Dashiell Hammett the political martyr. And this is where Johnson's abdication of independent judgment becomes most disturbing. That she means to concentrate on the political aspects of Hammett's life is clear from the opening chapter, since she begins not with his family background or his birth, but with his stay in prison. First martyrdom, then childhood.

When Hammett refused to answer questions about the bail-bond fund and received a six-month sentence for contempt of court, he told Hellman: "If it were more than jail, if it were my life, I would give it for what I think democracy is, and I don't let cops or judges tell me what I think democracy is." True, these are stirring Gary Cooperish words, but it is possible to take this declaration of incorruptibility at face value (as Diane Johnson does) only by ignoring Hammett's political history. Just what he thought democracy is turns out to be more problematic than it looks.

In her brief memoir of Hammett, Hellman claims she didn't know whether Hammett was a member of the Communist Party, but there seems to be no doubt that he joined in 1937 in Hollywood. One of his duties, Johnson reports, "was as a kind of enforcer, making sure people coughed up their weekly dues of $15 to the Party." Nine days before the Nazi-Soviet pact was announced, Hammett, along with some other members of the Stalinist-controlled League of American Writers, signed a statement denouncing "right-wing forces [who] have encouraged the fantastic falsehood that the U.S.S.R. and the totalitarian states are basically alike." When it turned out to be not so fantastic, Hammett, far from joining the massive defection from the Party, supported its anti-imperialist war stand, and continued to do so until Hitler invaded Russia. In an astonishing footnote to this period, Johnson remarks that Hammett "apparently accepted the Hitler-Stalin pact in accordance with the Party position. People who discussed politics with Hammett remember that . . . he had a notably long view of political events when many of the people he and Hellman knew were precipitated into varying crises of spirit." This notion of a "long view" attests not to Hammett's superior political wisdom, but to Johnson's political naiveté. As for the Party's about-face after Hitler invaded Russia, wasn't it nice, she sighs, that "people on both sides of the question of [the pact's] morality spoke to each other once again." If she can believe this kiss-and-make-up view of radical quarrels, she can believe anything.

And she does, sketching a more sim-

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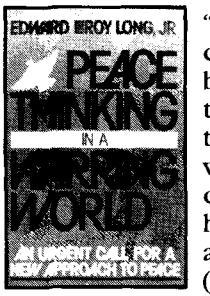

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pleminded black-and-white cartoon of the McCarthy period than Hellman's chronicle of defiance. "It seemed to many people," Johnson writes, "that hypocrisy, villainy and self-serving dishonor were the national afflictions; a war that had been fought against fascism seemed instead to have made the world safe for fascism in the form of persecution by the American government of people living in America." Malicious and destructive as Senator McCarthy and the Communist hunters in the House Un-American Activities Committee undeniably were, they did not succeed—came nowhere close to it at any time—in transforming America into a "fascist" state. Nor has Johnson resisted the urge to sneer at former Communists, lumping those who "regretted" having been in the Party with those who "were afraid of trouble," as though fear and regret were the same. According to Johnson, there was no moral difference between those who, as she puts it, "repented of their errors" and those who "denounced" their former friends. Anyone who called himself an anti-Communist in those days was ready, she declares, "to disclaim history, investigate it, excoriate it and rewrite it." What she does not say is that it was the Communists who were disclaiming and rewriting history. By taking the Fifth and stonewalling, they were refusing to stand up for their beliefs and principles. What non-Communist liberals were being asked to do was to defend the "right" of the Communists to lie!

At no point has Johnson taken the trouble to think about the nature of the Communist regime and the Party that the faithful like Dashiell Hammett were supporting at the time. How did he react, one wants to know, to what was going on in Russia as well as what was going on in the United States? (It is important to remember that Hammett stopped drinking for good in 1948, after which there was no alcoholic haze to protect him from the facts.) Did he know that the Smith Act, the original cause of his imprisonment, had been supported and applauded by the Communists when it was invoked by Roosevelt against the Trotskyist leaders who were jailed in Minneapolis in 1944? Was Hammett, writer as well as Communist, disturbed by Zhdanov's vilification of Akhmatova and other Russian poets, or by Stalin's persecution and murder of Jewish writers such as Bergelson and Feffer? What did he feel about the anti-Semitic show trials orchestrated by Stalin in Eastern Europe? Did Hammett have anything to say in 1956 when Khrushchev began to reveal the enormity of the atrocities committed by Stalin? Or about the Hungarian Revolution, which was initiated by writers—Julius Hay and Tibor Dery—who were also Communists? Did he not know anything about the concentration camps in the Soviet Union? None of these questions are raised by Johnson. Yet they are questions that no responsible biographer of such a man can ignore with impunity. If she could not find any satisfactory answers, if Hammett indeed preferred to remain silent about the mounting revelations of Stalinist horror, surely *that* would be worth mentioning.

What, then, is this authorized biography? It is a political act that seeks to fix an image of a time, and the character of the literary intelligentsia that participated in the politics of that time. In her life of Hammett, Johnson has tried to exemplify Lillian Hellman's mythologizing of history, according to which only such persons as Hammett were the men of honor of the 1950s. Looking at the record of that era, however, who can believe it? How shabby.

PEARL K. BELL

Pearl K. Bell is a writer who lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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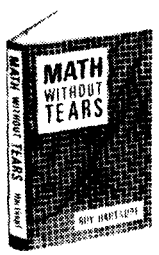

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Vladimir Tatlin and the Russian Avant-Garde
by John Milner

(Yale University Press, 252 pp., $29.95)

There are certain Russians who seem immune to export. Like the unsold books that booksellers are permitted to return to the publisher, they are there today and there tomorrow. Pushkin is the notorious example. Tatlin is another. One would have thought that the brilliant 1968 exhibit "The Machine," mounted by K. G. Pontus Hultén for the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and perpetuated in a gloriously mechanical catalogue, the only metal-bound book on my shelves, would have established Tatlin once and for all. There was a model of the famous Tower intended to memorialize the Third International, and one of the so-called Letatlin, a glider powered by a man lying prone inside its bentwood struts. So far as I am unscientifically able to determine, visitors to the exhibit have for the most part carried away an image of Tatlin as a sort of Bolshie crank, a mad Leonardo who yet had the shrewdness to protect his versions of the Watts Tower by dedicating them to the Workers' Paradise. The ornithopter was to have been a sort of air-bicycle with which proletarians would flit from their ideal apartments to the workplace. (I find no evidence that any official mind ever tumbled to the idea that the Letatlin, had it ever been produced, would have rendered the job of the border patrols infeasibly difficult.)

But Tatlin remains an enthusiasm of

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the very few who know Russian and have glimpsed his work in extenso. The *Concise Columbia Encyclopedia* (1983) lists Malevich, our man's chief rival, but Tatlin, with his dates wrong, is merely mentioned under "Constructivism." John Milner's fine book should now correct this situation. A work of great cultural importance, it is incomparably the richest display available in English of the work, astonishing in its scope and diversity, of one of the great geniuses of the Russian avant-garde. Vladimir Evgrafovich Tatlin (the name is pronounced tot-LEAN) lived from 1885 to 1953. His biography includes the obligatory detested father, the early death of his mother (a poet), and, as he was approaching manhood, running away to sea on a sailing vessel. Like Conrad, Tatlin never altogether recovered from the experience of canvas, wind, and salt air. Unlike the Conrad of dangerously fouled syntax, Tatlin learned also that unneeded stuff should be ruthlessly jettisoned: he was, as an artist, a leaver-outer, not a putter-inner.

TATLIN IS always in the foreground, but the pages of the book swarm with the many geniuses of Russia's splendid and short-lived explosion of creativity: Malevich, Larionov, the Burlyuks, Goncharova, Exter, Rodchenko, Rozanova, Archipenko, and many others. Of all his associates, however, none approached the importance of the poet Velimir Khlebnikov, who was practically Tatlin's alter ego, and who is naturally the second most prominent personage in Milner's story. To Khlebnikov and to his memory (he died in 1922) Tatlin never ceased to pay the most heartfelt homage, and it was said that the only way truly to experience Khlebnikov's infinitely hermetic poetry was to hear it read by Tatlin.

I do not know of another Russian modernist more universally revered by his friends than Khlebnikov, nor do I know of one whose theories and works, condensed for succinct exposition, seem loonier. Tatlin, by comparison, is an artist of the most suburban levelheadedness. Khlebnikov's several obsessions included an all but mystical birdlore (his father was an ornithologist), the application of his own weird arithmomancy to the study of history (he thought that a period of 365 years intervened between men of exceptional genius, and Tatlin was consoled by the fact that his birth in 1885 was divided from the death of Leonardo da Vinci in 1519 by only one extra digit), and above all the composition of poetry with a kind of phonic material derived from his study of Slavic word-roots. All of these concerns can be traced in Tatlin's revolutionary visual and plastic art, in his architectural monument, his birdman glider, his stage designs, and all his other work. There are moments when Tatlin seems to have been Khlebnikov's most inspired invention.

Important as the ornithology and the numerology were, it was the analysis and recombination of language elements for the purpose of making poems that most influenced Tatlin. At one stage of his growing up he had been, like Maxim Gorky, an icon painter. At a later stage, in the great seedbed year of 1913, he had flocked with other Russians to Berlin and Paris to sit, with we know not what personal success or failure (he knew only Russian), at the feet of Picasso. The immediately succeeding calamity of World War I effectively

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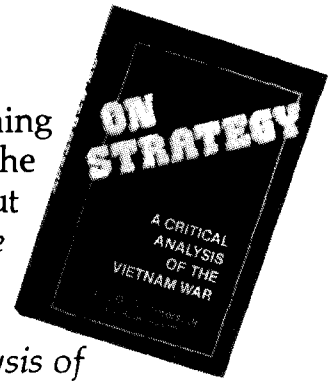

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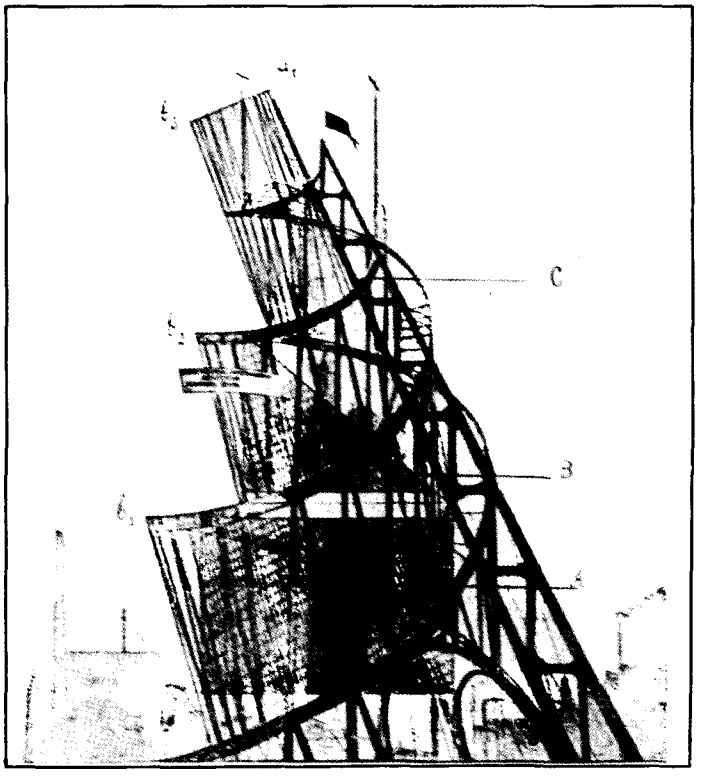
penned all the Russian carriers of cubism and futurism back within the borders of their own country, there to recover as best they could from the intoxication of Western experimentalism and to rediscover their native traditions.

For Tatlin the native tradition consisted of the icon—the holy image with its divine indifference to spatial illusion, its unmixed pigments, and its occasional incorporation of precious metals—and the poetry of Khlebnikov, which in its most exploratory mode dispensed with conventional "meaning" in favor of the purely aural and subliminal meaning of familiar roots and affixes cut up and recombined.

Milner dwells usefully and at length on the almost completely neglected early drawings and paintings, demonstrating their prompt liberation from a sort of dilute cubism to an entirely individual graphic expression. Figural representation quickly evaporated, leaving the picture surface an arena for conflicting and harmonizing planes and vectoring lines. With hectic rapidity Tatlin leapt to the logical next step—the composition of visual objects in three dimensions (made of metal, wood, glass, wire, and rope, with pigments of the usual kind often added). The indebtedness to Picasso's sheet-metal-and-wire guitar is perfectly obvious, but so is Tatlin's sudden renunciation of all reference to the objects of everyday life, and to everyday life itself. His reliefs become the closest analogues to Khlebnikov's poems that he could achieve: ordinary stuff, the detritus of the material world (visual etyma, as it were), analyzed and reassembled into images that afforded a satisfaction not reducible to the formulations of common language. The "painterly reliefs," as Tatlin named these things, were his breakthrough into the endless inventiveness of the second half of his career.

In his discussion of these fascinating objects Milner finds it necessary for reasons not altogether clear to me to distance Tatlin from whatever is "expressive" and "personal" and, indeed, from "style" itself. With an iteration that becomes finally rather tiresome he wishes to demonstrate that Tatlin shucked off any imported search for "expression" and "style" in order to be free for "exploration" and "investigation." Sheet metal cut into various shapes, patches of leather, bits of wire, wooden rods, shards of earthenware, and so on, were juxtaposed in a quasi-scientific and neutral manner—all in a spirit of disinterested, impersonal inquiry.

What I think Milner fails to grasp is that two of his favorite words ("exploration" and "investigation") imply one of the fundamental modes of discourse, interrogation, and that interrogation is no whit less "expressive" or "stylistic" than declaration. Tatlin's Tower and his glider and prints and paintings and stage designs are as compact of language as Khlebnikov's "meaningless" poems and hence are as "expressive" as any other human artifact. The style of Tatlin's curious constructions is of course not that of any native or borrowed cultural inheritance: it is the style—now instantly recognizable, expressive, and personal—of Vladimir Tatlin's reliefs. Why is a new style not a style? And where is the danger of using the word? This would not be worth dwelling on if Milner did not insist upon it so repeatedly.



VLADIMIR TATLIN'S 'ELEVATION OF THE MONUMENT TO THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL' (1919-1920)

I must also say that Milner's apparent command of the Russian language does not conduce to confidence. His translation of one of the simpler poems of Khlebnikov is riddled with gaffes of an elementary sort (the ordinary word for "dead" being translated "mighty," the poetic word for "dell" as "veil") and in another place "Studiya impressionistov" ("The Impressionists' Studio") is rendered as "A Study of the Impressionists," which is not the sort of mistake to be expected from an art historian handling Russian materials.

The famous Monument to the Third International, otherwise known as Tatlin's Tower, receives a chapter all to itself, as it doubtless deserves, and Milner discusses it with great gusto and a degree of ingenuity lavished upon no other single work. It is very enjoyable. He juxtaposes it to every conceivable mythical and historical antecedent, beginning with the Tower of Babel (though one misses Breughel's painting of this among the numerous illustrations).

One has to *see* a model diagram of this extraordinary structure, for no mere description can convey anything like its strangeness; most people, indeed, even while staring at a visual representation, feel reassured by the presence of a text to confirm what they are seeing. Not unlike the double helix of the DNA molecule, two intertwined spirals take off from the surface of the earth as though continuing above ground an immense career beneath it. They describe a conical shape and are supported on one side by a gigantic, leaning sort of spinal column, which seems not so much to be holding them up as crashing down upon them. The entire form seems ambiguous, like the glass cube illusion which seems to present now one, now the other surface to the fore. Is it a building taking off *ins Blaue* or one collapsing to the ground? But I am speaking of the Tower seen from only one angle; seen from another, it presents nothing like the aspect sketched above.

Inside this vast space were to be, from the bottom, an immense cube to

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house the legislature and other mass meetings; a pyramid for the executive committees; a cylinder whence the decisions taken downstairs would be flashed to a waiting world by all the means of communication then known, including a giant cinema screen; and finally a small hemisphere, the function of which appears to be in some doubt, which I find sinister. These offices and auditoria were to rotate round their axes, the cube once a year, the pyramid once a month, and so on. It was to have been four hundred meters high, i.e., exactly one hundred meters higher than Eiffel's Tower in Paris, presumably so that Soviet tourists could say what Soviet tourists invariably say in any case: that's nice, but ours is better.

This colossus, whirling and flying (or falling) and flashing the slogan of the day, was to have bestridden the River Neva in the heart of Peter's (and Pushkin's and Dostoevsky's and Mandelstam's) beautiful city. That its actual construction was completely unthinkable is one of the favors for which Almighty Providence ought to be nightly and prayerfully thanked.

On the other hand, the Letatlin (the name is a telescoping of the Russian verb "to fly" and Tatlin's own name) might one day have gotten off the ground if only its inventor had survived until the technology became available. How gleefully he would have welcomed that man-powered craft, the Gossamer Something or Other, that won a prize for crossing the English Channel! And would he have been distressed to learn that hang gliders, in some areas, now inconvenience the more conventional forms of aeronautics? I doubt it.

TATLIN DIED the same year as Stalin. We tend to feel in the West that any genius who panted on that long has some explaining to do. Did Pasternak, another survivor, have Stalin in his back pocket simply for translating the Georgian poets (those whom Stalin had spared)? Or did he *know* something? Why did Tatlin co-decease the monster? No one knows, of course. In his latter years he rather regressed to less daring activities. He had a considerable following and exercised a good deal of bureaucratic clout, but he became what would today be called a designer—a *good* designer, but no longer an inspired dreamer. He designed a suit of clothes which looked quite a lot like the zoot suit of the decadent West, a pavilion for cattle breeding at an agricultural fair, a plump little milk jug, and a chair that looked like a tractor seat on a springy bentwood frame, which I should greatly have enjoyed seeing Brezhnev, for instance, trying to sit upon. He continued to design sets and costumes for the theater, and he probably did much of which we have no knowledge, since he was increasingly reticent about taking personal credit for any sort of creation.

CLARENCE BROWN

Clarence Brown teaches Russian and comparative literature at Princeton and is the author of *Mandelstam* (Cambridge University Press, 1973), among other books.

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 4*

that the House version of the bill roll back the excessive tax breaks that the independents received in the 1981 tax cut free-for-all.

A second example of poor analysis is Samuelson's uncritical use of the statistic that Democratic candidates, in the aggregate, outspend Republican candidates to suggest that the present system works sensibly. If you look only at close races, you will find that Republicans have outspent Democrats by an impressive margin. Indeed, Drew's book contains a remarkable quotation from White House political strategist Lee Atwater that money bought the Republicans fifteen to twenty seats in the 1982 congressional elections.

Without reform of campaign finance, special interests will continue to dominate American government and we will not cope successfully with the economic policy issues that confront us and about which Samuelson generally writes so cogently and persuasively.

THOMAS J. DOWNEY
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TRB, *from page 6*

spirators who've brought such woe to the world? It's tempting. ("Billions, Mr. Yamani? What billions?") Trouble is, this willing suspension of financial disbelief supports more than just the invested wealth of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. It's what has made advanced economic development possible. Without it, the whole world would look like . . . well, like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

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The suspension of disbelief is precisely what is threatened by the inability of the debtor nations to pay back their loans, because the banks in turn owe that money to other people, who will stop believing in fairies if they suddenly find they cannot withdraw it. But someone is going to get stuck with this hot potato. Undoubtedly it will have to be sliced up and shared: a piece to the poorest people of the poorest nations, who'll have to struggle even harder for their daily bread; a piece to the taxpayers of the developed countries; maybe even a piece to the banks, though they've been amazingly skillful in avoiding any cost so far. They even get "rescheduling fees" and interest penalties every time a loan payment is postponed.

Why on earth shouldn't a piece of the hot potato be served up to the rich oil kingdoms? They are the ones who created this mess, and they are utterly dependent on the system that's now at risk. Other parties, like you and me, are being dragged into the debt swamp against our wills, for fear of worse if we stay out. Why not Saudi Arabia ($163 billion invested in the West), Kuwait ($80 billion), the United Arab Emirates ($40 billion), Libya ($32 billion), Iraq ($29 billion) . . . ? The way everyone respectable dealing with the debt problem has overlooked these hard-to-miss piles demonstrates how completely the powers that be of the West have made their peace with, and even bought into, the OPEC conspiracy.

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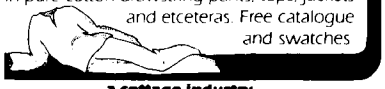

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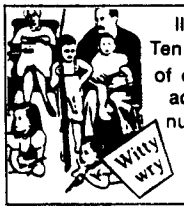

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Ye Gods

CAN YOU IMAGINE what would have happened if my old boss, Jimmy Carter, had suddenly and without a word to anyone decided to yank Zbigniew Brzezinski off the national security desk in the West Wing and appoint him Secretary of the Interior? Or if Nixon had done the same with Henry Kissinger? Can you picture the flap *that* would have touched off? There would have been an immediate spate of columns speculating about the President's "growing isolation" and "increasingly erratic behavior," followed by editorials about "disarray" in the White House and the Cabinet, followed by anxious bulletins from Europe detailing "mounting fears" of American "instability," followed by more columns and editorials about the "firestorm" of criticism. There has been no such reaction to President Reagan's bizarre appointment of William Clark to succeed James Watt. Why? The answer can only be that everyone—the press, Congress, foreign governments, and of course the State Department—is overwhelmed with relief that "Judge" Clark is to be removed from anything to do with foreign policy. It is a field to which he brought primitive urges of the "peace through strength" variety, untempered by knowledge or experience. The "Judge" is nearly as unsuited to his new post as he was to his old one, but putting him in charge of America's precious, irreplaceable natural heritage seems a small price to pay for getting his finger off the button.

LISTING THE qualifications of the Secretary of the Interior-designate, the President called him a "God-fearing Westerner" and a "fourth-generation rancher." Perhaps these qualities help explain why Reagan chose Clark rather than Kissinger or Brzezinski, both of whom are available. Kissinger has described himself as the Lone Ranger, but his family has never been heavily into ranching. I once saw Brzezinski in chaps, boots, spurs, and ten-gallon hat (this was at a party for the movie "Urban Cowboy"), but the preposterous getup only made it more obvious than usual that he is not a Westerner. And it's likelier that God is Zbig-fearing than the reverse. Still, can anyone seriously doubt that either Kissinger or Brzezinski would make a far better Secretary of the Interior than Clark, or anyone else who is likely to get the nod under this Administration? Apparently Reagan cannot conceive of a Secretary of the Interior with a foreign accent, even though the greatest man ever to serve in that post, Carl Schurz, was a German immigrant who made Kissinger sound like Don Pardo. No, a Reagan Secretary of the Interior must be a natural-born American who sits tall in the saddle as he gazes out over Yellowstone, murmuring to God in laconic, Gary Cooper-ish tones about free enterprise and mineral rights.

WASHINGTON'S MOVIE of the moment is *The Right Stuff*, which is going to be bigger than *Star Wars*, I think. It's terrific, a serio-comic patriotic epic that will make even foreigners proud to be Americans, and it portrays John Glenn not only as God-fearing but as a bit of a god himself. There's been a lot of chin-pulling about whether *The Right Stuff* means that our politics is now to be dominated by celluloid imagery. This has given the Glenn people an opening to point out that their man's heroism actually happened, movie or no movie. Perhaps, thanks to Glenn and *The Right Stuff*, the "actor issue" will at last catch up with Reagan, and people will at last consider the implications of the fact that we have a President who, when he was past fifty, was still pretending to be other people in fantasies designed for mass consumption.

I NOTE WITH SADNESS the passing of *Win* magazine, which for seventeen years was published weekly and then fortnightly by the Workshop In Nonviolence and the War Resisters League. *Win*, a rather slapdash, tiny-circulation journal of opinion printed on coarse, highly absorbent paper, was a kind of bulletin board and house organ for the nonviolent radical pacifist countercultural left. In the late '60s and early '70s, when I used to write for it, its symbol was a yellow submarine. Believe it or not, the atmosphere on the left at the time, at least in New York, was one of such grim "militancy" that this bit of whimsy was daringly iconoclastic. Maris Cakars, the editor in those days, never let himself or the magazine be bullied by the prevailing humorlessness. Nor did the magazine succumb to the cult of toughness that infected the radical left nearly as much as it did the Johnson and Nixon Administrations. At a time when a lot of radicals were talking about picking up the gun, offing the pig, and "learning to be good communists," *Win* stuck to its nonviolent creed, insisted on the humanity of cops and other benighted types, and made room for anticommunists like me. *Win* was naive and flaky, and it had too much of a soft spot for dumb revolutionary romanticism. But it could be inspiring, and it had integrity.

THE NEW REPUBLIC too is an ample church; there is room in the leftmost pew for the occasional Marxist (no Leninists, though, please), and in the rightmost for the odd libertarian. Charles Fried, whom I take to be one of the latter, argues, in an interesting essay published in these pages last week ("Exit," TNR, October 31), that the Berlin Wall built by the Soviets, and the currency controls resorted to by the French, are expressions of the same "mentality," the mentality of "bureaucrats, social planners, and collectivists." If you think this overlooks some gigantic distinctions, I agree with you; but then overlooking distinctions is one of libertarianism's (and conservatism's) foibles. Its defense of liberty is so sweeping that it muddles up the freedom to speak one's mind with the "freedom" to beat the tax man, and its economism (a fixation it shares with Marxism) is so extreme that it tends to locate the human soul in the vicinity of the human wallet. The result is that libertarians sometimes paint themselves into moral corners, as Fried does, for example, when he lumps the Soviet gulag together with the efforts of state legislatures to prevent plant closings and keep businesses from moving away. It may or may not be wise for New York to try to keep the Jets from moving to New Jersey, but Stalinism it ain't.

H.H.

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Merit Pay for Teachers

Amid the chorus of concern about the troubles afflicting education in America, the idea of merit pay for teachers is gaining favor.

Fully 80% of the people polled in a recent national survey expressed their approval of basing salaries on merit to attract and retain better public school teachers.

In most fields, including business, the best pay generally goes to the best professional performers. Not so in teaching.

Traditionally, pedagogic salaries are scaled to length of service up to a ceiling. Teachers of equal experience and educational attainments, working in the same school system, get the same pay. Meritorious performance goes unrecognized in the paycheck.

Lack of financial incentive is one of the reasons why the brightest prospects among college students are discouraged from taking up teaching. Too many job openings in the schools go to second-raters. As a result, students in alarming numbers are coming out of the public schools, diplomas in hand, ill prepared for college or the workplace.

A pivotal solution to the nation's educational shortcomings lies in upgrading the teaching ranks. Any such effort must be directed at keeping top teachers in the classrooms, instead of disheartening them so they leave for jobs elsewhere, and also at attracting newcomers who are smart, talented, and motivated.

There's merit to merit pay. In the words of President Reagan, "How else do you provide an incentive for attracting the best and the brightest into education?"

If we want better education, we need better teachers. One way to draw them is to pay them better. Basic pay scales should be improved. This should be coupled with accountability for performance and special recompense for special creativity, dedication, and achievement in stretching young minds.

Teacher's organizations have long opposed merit pay, although their opposition shows signs of changing in the face of mounting public disaffection with the educational system. Among their concerns is that supervisors and administrators would be swayed by personal favoritism and would apply unfair standards in judging teachers' work. To us in business and industry, where performance appraisals and pay pegged to merit are accepted practices, that scarcely seems to be an insoluble drawback.

Teaching used to be one of the most honored of professions. Public education in America used to be unrivaled in quality. Recognizing and rewarding excellence in teaching, through merit pay, could help restore the profession and the institution to the stature they once held.

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